Gunston Classics

THE ROVER BOYS' ON LAND OR SEA

ARTHUR M. WINFIELD

Book #7

Gunston Classics

Public Domain Series

Ex Libris

Digital Publishing Syndication

EST. 1999

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GUNSTON CLASSICS
PO BOX 5905
BALTIMORE, MD 21282

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The Rover Boys on Land and Sea:
The Crusoes of Seven Islands

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INTRODUCTION.

MY DEAR BOYS: "The Rover Boys on Land and Sea," is a complete story in itself, but forms the seventh volume of the "Rover Boys Series for Young Americans."

As I mentioned in a previous volume of this series, when I began this set of books I had in mind to write no more than three volumes, relating the adventures of Dick, Tom, and Sam Rover, at home, at school, and elsewhere. But the publication of "The Rover Boys at School," "The Rover Boys on the Ocean," and "The Rover Boys in the Jungle," immediately called for more stories of the same sort, so year after year I have followed with "The Rover Boys out West," "The Rover Boys on the Great Lakes," "The Rover Boys in the Mountains," and now the volume before you, which relates the adventures of the three brothers, and some of their friends and enemies, on the sea and on a number of far away islands, where, for a time, all lead a sort of Robinson Crusoe life.

In writing this tale I had in mind not alone to please my young readers, but also to give them a fair picture of life on the ocean as it is to-day, in distinction to what it was years ago, and also to acquaint the boys and girls with some of the beauties of those mid-ocean lands which are generally, so strange to all of us. The boys see much that is new, novel, and pleasing—new fruits, new flowers, new animals—and have often to use their wits to the utmost, to get themselves out of serious difficulty and also to make themselves, and those under their protection, comfortable.

Once again I thank my young friends for the interest they have shown in my previous stories. I trust that all who peruse this volume will find it equally to their liking.

Affectionately and sincerely yours,

ARTHUR M. WINFIELD. 1903

On Land and Sea **Frontispiece**

THE ROVER BOYS ON LAND AND SEA

CHAPTER I

THE ROVER BOYS IN SAN FRANCISCO

"Well, Dick, here we are in San Francisco at last."

"Yes, Tom, and what a fine large city it is."

"We'll have to take care, or we'll get lost," came from a third boy, the youngest of the party.

"Just listen to Sam!" cried Tom Rover. "Get lost! As if we weren't in the habit of taking care of ourselves."

"Sam is joking," came from Dick Rover. "Still we might get lost here as well as in New York or any other large city."

"Boston is the place to get lost in," said Tom Rover. "Got streets that curve in all directions. But let us go on. Where is the hotel?"

"I'm sure I don't know," came from Sam Rover.

"Cab! carriage! coupe!" bawled a cabman standing near. "Take you anywhere you want to go, gents."

"How much to take the three of us to the Oakland House?"

"Take you there for a dollar, trunks and all."

"I'll go you," answered Dick Rover. "Come on, I'll see that you get the right trunks."

"I think we are going to have some good times while we are on the Pacific coast," observed Tom Rover, while he and Sam were waiting for Dick and the cabman to return.

"I shan't object to a good time," replied Sam. "That is what we came for."

"Before we go back I am going to have a sail up and down the coast."

"To be sure, Tom. Perhaps we can sail down to Santa Barbara. That is a sort of Asbury Park and Coney Island combined, so I have been told."

Dick Rover and the cabman soon returned. The trunks were piled on the carriage and the boys got in, and away they bowled from the station in the direction of the Oakland House.

It was about ten o'clock of a clear day in early spring. The boys had reached San Francisco a few minutes before, taking in the sights on the way. Now they sat up in the carriage taking in more sights, as the turnout moved along first one street and then another.

As old readers of this series know, the Rover boys were three in number, Dick being the oldest, fun-loving Tom next, and sturdy-hearted Sam the youngest. They were the only offspring of Anderson Rover, a former traveler and mine-owner, who, at present, was living with his brother Randolph and his sister-in-law Martha, on their beautiful farm at Valley Brook, in the heart of New York State.

During the past few years the Rover boys had had numerous adventures, so many, in fact, that they can scarcely be hinted at here. While their father was in the heart of Africa, their Uncle Randolph had sent them off to Putnam Hall Academy. Here they had made many friends among the boys and also among some folks living in the vicinity, including Mrs. Stanhope and her daughter Dora, a girl who, according to Dick Rover's idea, was the sweetest creature in the whole world. They had also made some enemies, the worst of the number being Dan Baxter, a fellow who had been the bully of the school, but who was now a

homeless wanderer on the face of the earth. Baxter came from a disreputable family, his father having at one time tried to swindle Mr. Rover out of a rich gold mine in the West. The elder Baxter was now in prison suffering the penalty for various crimes.

A term at school had been followed by an exciting chase on the ocean, and then by a trip through the jungle of Africa, whence the Rover boys had gone to find their long-lost father. After this the boys made a trip West to establish their parent's claim to the gold mine just mentioned, and this was followed by a grand trip on the Great Lakes in which the boys suffered not a little at the hands of the Baxters. On an island on one of the lakes the Rover boys found a curious casket and this, on being opened, proved to contain some directions for locating a treasure secreted in the heart of the Adirondack Mountains.

"We must locate that treasure," said Tom Rover, and off they started for the mountains, and did locate it at last, but not before Dan Baxter had done everything in his power to locate it ahead of them. When they finally outwitted their enemy, Dan Baxter had disappeared, and that was the last they had seen of him for some time.

The Rover boys had expected to return to Putnam Hall and their studies immediately after the winter outing in the Adirondacks, but an unexpected happening at the institution of learning made them change their plans. Three pupils were taken down with scarlet fever, and rather than run the risk of having more taken sick, Captain Victor Putnam had closed up the Academy for the time being, and sent the pupils to their homes.

"The boys will have to go to some other school," their Aunt Martha had said, but one and another had murmured at this, for they loved Captain Putnam too well to desert him so quickly.

"Let us wait a few months," had been Dick's suggestion.

"Let us study at home," had come from Sam.

"Let us travel," Tom had put in. "Travel broadens the mind." He loved to be "on the go" all the time.

The matter was talked over for several days, and Tom begged that they might take a trip across the continent and back, using some of the money derived from the old treasure. At last Anderson Rover consented; and two days later the three boys were off, going by way of New York City, on the Chicago Limited. They had spent two days in the great city by the lakes, and then come direct to the Golden Gate city.

"I wonder if we will meet anybody we know while we are out here," said Tom, as the carriage continued on its way.

"If we get down to Santa Barbara I think we'll meet somebody," answered Dick, and he blushed just a trifle. "I got a letter in Chicago, as you know. It was from Dora Stanhope, and she said that she and her mother were traveling again and expected to go either to Santa Barbara or Los Angeles. Her mother is not well again, and the doctor thought the air on the Pacific coast might benefit her."

"Oh, my, but won't Dick have an elegant time, if he falls in with Dora!" cried Sam. "Tom, we won't be in it."

"Now don't you start to tease me," returned Dick, his face redder than ever. "I guess Dora always gave you a good time, too."

"That's right, she did," said Tom. And then he added: "Did she say anything about the Lanings?" For the Laning girls, Nellie and Grace, were cousins to Dora Stanhope, and Tom and Sam thought almost as much of them as Dick did of Dora.

"To be sure she did," replied Dick. "But I guess it's—well, it's a secret."

"A secret!" shouted Sam. "Not much, Dick! Let us in on it at once!"

"Yes, do!" put in Tom.

"But it may prove a disappointment."

"We'll chance it," returned Tom.

"Well then, Dora wrote that if she and her mother could find a nice cottage at Los Angeles or Santa Barbara they were going to invite Nellie and Grace to come out and keep house with them for six months or so."

"Hurrah!" cried Sam enthusiastically. "I hope they come. If they do, won't the six of us just have boss times!" And his face glowed with anticipation.

"We can certainly have good times if Mrs. Stanhope's health will permit," said Dick. "Here we are at the hotel."

He uttered the last words as the carriage came to a stop at the curb. He leaped out and so did the others; and a few minutes later found them safe and sound in the hotel. They were assigned to a large room on the third floor, and hither they made their way, followed by their trunks, and then began to wash and dress up, preparatory to going down to the dining room, for the journeying around since breakfast had made them hungry.

"I think I am going to like San Francisco," said Tom, as he was adjusting a fresh collar and gazing out of the window at the same time. "Everything looks so bright and clean."

"They have some pretty tall buildings here, the same as in Chicago and New York," came from Dick, as he, too, gazed out of the window.

"Oh, all the big cities are a good deal alike," put in Sam, who was drying his face on a towel.

"San Francisco is a mighty rich place," continued Tom. "They are too rich even to use pennies. It's five cents here, or a bit there, or two bits for this and two bits for that. I never heard a quarter called two bits in New York."

"I've been told that is a Southern expression, and one used in the West Indies," said Dick. "The early Californians—My gracious!"

Dick broke off short and leaned far out of the window, which they had opened to let in the fresh spring air.

"What's up?" queried Tom. "Don't fall out." And he caught his elder brother by the arm.

"I must have been mistaken. But it did look like him," said Dick slowly.

"Look like whom?" asked Sam, joining the pair.

"Dan Baxter."

"Dan Baxter! Here?" shouted the others.

"I am pretty sure it was Dan Baxter."

"Where is he?" asked Tom.

"He is gone now—he just disappeared around the hotel corner."

"Well, if it really was Dan Baxter, we want to keep our eyes open," was Sam's comment.

CHAPTER II

THE TURNING UP OF DAN BAXTER

The boys were very curious concerning their old enemy, and on going below took a walk around several squares in the vicinity, in the hope of meeting the individual who had attracted Dick's attention.

But the search proved unsuccessful, and they returned to the hotel and went to dinner, with a larger appetite than ever.

"It would be queer if we met Dan Baxter out here," said Tom, while they were eating. "He seems to get on our heels, no matter where we go.

"If he came to San Francisco first, he'll think we have been following him up," said Sam.

"He must have come here before we did," said Dick. "Our arrival dates back but three hours," and he grinned.

The meal over the boys took it easy for a couple of hours, and then prepared to go out and visit half a dozen points of interest and also purchase tickets for a performance at one of the leading theaters in the evening.

As they crossed the lobby of the hotel they almost ran into a big, burly young fellow who was coming in the opposite direction.

"Dan Baxter!" ejaculated Dick. "Then I was right after all."

The burly young fellow stared first at Dick and then the others in blank amazement. He carried a dress-suit case, and this dropped from his hand to the floor.

"Whe—where did yo—you come from?" he stammered at last.

"I guess we can ask the same question," said Tom coldly.

"Been following me, have you?" sneered Dan Baxter, making an effort to recover his self-possession.

"No, we haven't been following you," said Sam.

"Supposing you tell us how it happens that you are here?"

"Suppose you tell us how it happens that you are here," came from Dick.

"That is my business."

"Our business is our own, too, Dan Baxter."

"You followed me," growled the big bully, his face darkening. "I know you and don't you forget it."

"Why should we follow you?" said Tom. "We got the best of you over that treasure in the Adirondacks."

"Oh, you needn't blow. Remember the old saying, 'He laughs best who laughs last.' I aint done with you yet—not by a long shot."

"Well, let me warn you to keep your distance," said Dick sternly. "If you don't, you'll regret it. We have been very easy with you in the past, but if you go too far, I, for one, will be for putting you where your father is, in prison."

"And I say the same," said Tom.

"Ditto here," came from Sam.

At these words a look of bitter hatred crossed Dan Baxter's face. He clenched his fists and breathed hard.

"You can brag when you are three to one," he cried fiercely. "But wait, that's all. My father would be a free man if it wasn't for you. Wait, and see what I do!"

And so speaking he caught up his dress-suit case, swung around on his heel, and left the hotel before anybody could stop him.

"He's the same old Baxter," said Tom, with a long sigh. "Always going to square up."

"I think he is more vindictive than he used to be," observed Sam. "When Dick spoke about his father being in prison he looked as if he would like to strangle the lot of us."

"Well, I admit it would be rough on any ordinary boy to mention the fact that his father was in prison," said Dick. "But we all know, and Dan Baxter himself knows, that one is about as wicked as the other. The only thing that makes Arnold Baxter's case worse is that he is old enough to know better."

"So is Dan old enough to know better," was Tom's comment.

"I believe he was coming here to get accommodations," said Dick.

"If he was, that would tend to prove that he had just arrived in San Francisco, Dick."

"True. But he may have been in this vicinity, perhaps in Oakland, Alameda, or some other nearby town."

"What do you suppose could have brought him here?"

"That's a conundrum. Maybe he thought the East was getting too hot to hold him."

"I wish we knew where he was going."

"Let us see if we can follow him up."

But to follow Dan Baxter up was out of the question, as they speedily discovered when they stepped out on the sidewalk. People were hurrying in all directions, and the bully had been completely swallowed up in the crowd.

"We must watch out," said Dick. "Now he knows we are here he will try to do us harm, mark my words."

The walk that afternoon proved full of interest, and in the evening they went to see a performance of a light opera at the Columbia Theater. The performance gave them a good deal of pleasure.

"Quarter past eleven!" exclaimed Dick, when they were coming away. "That's the time we got our money's worth."

"I thought it must be late," said Tom. "I was getting hungry. Let us get a bite of something before we go back to the hotel."

The others were willing, and they entered a nearby restaurant and seated themselves at one of the tables. As they did this, a person who had been following them stopped at the door to peer in after them. The person was Dan Baxter.

"They are going to dine before retiring," he muttered to himself. "The Old Nick take the luck! They have all the good times, while I have only the bad!"

Dan Baxter had followed the boys from the hotel to the theater and had also waited around for them to come out. He wanted to "square up" with them, but had no definite plan of action, and was trusting to luck for something to turn up in his favor.

He had drifted to the West for a double reason. The one was, as the boys had surmised, because the East seemed to be getting too hot to hold him. His second reason was that he hoped to get passage on some vessel bound for Sydney, Australia. He had a distant relative in Australia, and thought that if he could only see that relative personally he might be able to get some money. He was nearly out of funds, and so far the relative, although rich, had refused to send any money by mail or express.

"They have everything they want, while I have nothing," he went on savagely. "And they don't deserve it, either. Oh, how I wish I could wring their necks for 'em!"

Suddenly an idea struck him and without waiting for the boys to come out of the restaurant he hopped on board of a street car running in the direction of the Oakland House. Entering the hotel office he asked to look at the register.

"Room 324," he said to himself. "That is on the third floor, I suppose, since they generally start a new hundred for every floor. Wonder if I can get up without being noticed?"

He watched his chance, and slipping past the bell boys, made his way up the stairs, which, on account of the elevators, were but little used. In a few minutes he was in front of the door to Room 324. He tried it cautiously, to find it locked.

"Now if only the keys will work," he muttered, breathing hard, and taking a bunch of keys from his pocket he tried them, one after another.

He had tried four keys without success, when he saw a waiter approaching with a trayful of good things for a late supper in a nearby apartment. At once he moved away down the hallway and did not return until the servant had disappeared from view.

He had five other keys and the third fitted the lock, although rather crudely; so crudely in fact that once the lock bolt was turned the key could not be withdrawn.

"That's bad," he thought. "But as it cannot be helped I'll have to make the best of it. I mustn't stay here too long," and going into the room he closed the door after him.

There was a faint light burning at one of the gas jets and this he turned up, and pulled down the shades of the windows. Then he gazed swiftly around the large room, noting the boys' trunks and traveling bags and several articles of wearing apparel scattered about.

"Oh, if only I can find what I am after," he muttered. "But more than likely they carry their money with them, or else they left it at the hotel office."

All of the trunks and traveling bags were locked, and to force the trunks open seemed at first impossible. One of the traveling bags was slit open with a sharp pocket-knife the bully carried and the contents emptied on one of the beds.

"Not much that I want," muttered Dan Baxter, as he gazed at the collection. Then a jewel case caught his eye and he opened it. "A diamond stud and a diamond scarf pin! Not so bad, after all!" And he transferred the jewelry to his pocket.

A second later he came upon a bunch of keys. They proved to belong to the trunks and bags, and soon he had the trunks open and the contents scattered in all directions. Then he went down on his knees, examining everything brought to light.

It must be confessed that he was in a fever of excitement. The Rover boys might return at any moment, and he knew full well that to be caught would mean a term in prison. He kept his ears on the alert while his heart thumped loudly within his bosom.

"A pocketbook at last!" he cried softly, and snatched it up. One look showed him a, small pile of five and ten-dollar bills, exactly two hundred and seventy-five dollars in all. Then he found another jewel case, and from it extracted a second diamond stud and a pair of very fine cuff buttons.

"That is all I guess I can get," he muttered, as he stood up. "But I might as well take a new outfit while I am at it," he added, and picked up several articles of wearing apparel. These he stuffed in one of the bags which had not been cut, and around it put a small strap.

Tiptoeing his way to the door, he opened it and listened. Nobody was within hearing or sight. But as he stepped out, the waiter he had before seen came once more into view, this time carrying a tray with some bottles and a box of cigars. The waiter eyed him curiously again, but said nothing.

"Too bad he saw me, but it can't be helped," thought Dan Baxter, and made his way downstairs with all possible speed. Once in the lower hall he lost no time in gaining the street. In another moment he was swallowed up in the darkness of the night.

CHAPTER III

A DISCOVERY AND WHAT FOLLOWED

"Hullo, what does this mean? Here is a key in the door."

It was Dick Rover who spoke. He stood in the hallway of the hotel, and beside him were Tom and Sam. They had eaten rather heartily at the restaurant and taken more time than they had anticipated.

"I didn't leave the key there," came from Tom. "Here it is," and he brought it out of his pocket. "I meant to leave it at the desk, but it slipped my mind."

Dick found the door open and walked into the room, followed by his brothers. Baxter had extinguished the gas and they stood in the dark until Sam found a match and lit up. Then a cry went up from all three:

"We have been robbed!"

"This is some sneak thief's work," came from Dick. "Run down and tell the hotel clerk at once."

Tom bolted from the room and went down the stairs three steps at a time. The clerk sat dozing in his chair and was roused up with difficulty. But as soon as he realized that something was wrong he was wide-awake.

"A robbery, eh?" he queried. "What have you lost?"

"We've got to find that out," answered Tom.

In less than a quarter of an hour they knew the extent of their loss—three diamonds and a pair of cuff buttons, in all worth over two hundred dollars, and two hundred and seventy-five dollars in cash—not to

mention a ruined valise and one missing, and the loss of a light overcoat, some silk handkerchiefs and some underwear.

"A total loss of over five hundred dollars," said Tom.

At this the hotel clerk gave a long whistle. "As much as that?"

"Yes," said Dick.

"We must get on the track of the thief, and without delay."

"I reckon I know the thief," said Sam.

"You think it was Dan Baxter?" questioned his elder brother.

"I do."

"Perhaps you are right. But there is no proof that he did it."

The hotel clerk found the windows closed and locked.

"The thief came in and went out by the door," he said. "The hall boys or somebody else must have seen him. This key is stuck in the lock, which proves that it is not a regular hotel key."

Without delay the story of the robbery was telephoned to the nearest police station, and soon two detectives appeared. By this time some of the servants noticed that something was wrong, and the waiter who had seen Dan Baxter come in and go out told his story, to which the boys, the hotel clerk, and the detectives listened with interest.

"Tell us just how that fellow looked," said Dick, and the waiter gave a very good description of the person he had seen.

"I imagine Sam is right," said Dick. "If it wasn't Dan Baxter it was his double."

Upon hearing this the hotel clerk and the detectives insisted upon knowing who Dan Baxter was, and the boys told as much of the bully as they deemed necessary.

"Of course, if he is guilty the chances are that he will leave San Francisco as soon as possible," said one of the detectives. "The best we can do is to try to head him off."

"And we'll do our best to find him, too," added Tom.

"I think the hotel ought to be responsible for this robbery," said Dick.

"You didn't leave your key at the desk when you went out," cried the hotel clerk, struck by a sudden idea.

"What of that?" asked Tom.

"That makes the guest responsible."

"What!" cried Tom, aghast.

"We are responsible only when the key is left at the desk. And jewels must be left for keeping in one of our safes," went on the clerk. "There are our rules," and he pointed to the printed form tacked on the inside of the door.

"Don't let us talk about that just now," said one of the detectives. "I think we can get hold of this thief, and if we are quick about it we'll get everything he took, too."

The matter was talked over for a quarter of an hour longer and then the detectives went off to make their report and to follow on the trail of Dan Baxter, if such a thing was possible.

It must be confessed that the three Rover boys slept but little that night. The loss of the cash was something of a serious matter to them, even though they still possessed a hundred odd dollars in cash between them, and could easily telegraph home for more. More than this, the diamonds and cuff buttons had been gifts of which they were very proud.

"And to think that Dan Baxter should get them," said Tom. "I wouldn't feel half so bitter if it had been just some ordinary sneak thief." And the others said the same.

Two days went by and nothing was learned concerning Dan Baxter further than that he had put up at the Montgomery Hotel for one night and had left early in the morning.

"He is hundreds of miles away from here by this time," said Dick sadly.

"He said he would get square, and I guess he has done it," returned Tom.

But Dan Baxter had not gotten as far as they supposed. He was in hiding in Oakland, across the bay, having pawned the diamonds at a pawn-broker's of shady reputation for seventy-five dollars. This gave him three hundred and fifty dollars in cash, which made him, for the time being, feel quite rich.

But he was afraid to take a train to some other town, and so remained in the boarding house for nearly a week, under the assumed name of Robert Brown.

At the end of the fifth day Dan Baxter became acquainted with a seafaring man named Jack Lesher. Lesher was a rough fellow, who had sailed to many ports on the Pacific Ocean. He had now obtained the position of first mate on a large schooner which was to sail in a few days from San Francisco to several ports in Australia.

"I'd like to go on that trip to Australia," said Baxter, thinking of his distant relative. "Do you want a passenger?"

"I'll see about it, my hearty," replied Jack Lesher, and on the following day said that Captain Blossom would take him for an even hundred dollars. A bargain was struck at once, and Dan Baxter went on board of the schooner *Golden Wave* that afternoon.

"I'm glad I am out of it," he told himself, when snug on board of the craft. "I'll get to Australia after all, and I'm considerably richer than I thought I would be. More than that, I've got in on those Rover boys in a way they won't forget in a hurry."

While the detectives looked for the thief, the boys had small heart to go sight-seeing. Every time they, went out they looked for Dan Baxter.

"If only I could meet him!" cried Tom. "Oh, but wouldn't I just punch him good before I passed him over to a policeman."

During those days the lads received several letters from home, and also three communications from the Stanhopes and the Lanings.

"The Stanhopes have gone to Santa Barbara," announced Dick, after perusing an epistle from Dora. "And she says her mother is slightly better."

"Nellie Laning is coming out, and so is Grace," said Tom.

"When?" questioned Dick.

"They have already started, according to the letter I have," put in Sam. "Boys, I think we can have just the jolliest time ever was when the girls are all together."

"Right you are," came from Tom. "What a pity we had to have that robbery to darken our fun."

"I am not going to let it darken my fun," said Dick. "Don't worry but what some day we'll get the best of Dan Baxter. That stolen stuff will never do him much good."

The very next morning came word from the detectives. One of them called at the hotel.

"I am afraid the case is queered," said he. "We tracked the rascal to Oakland, and now it looks as if he had given us the slip for good."

"Can't you find any trace of him?" questioned Sam.

"Oh, yes! but he has shipped on a vessel which is bound for Australia, and as she is already two days out of port he is out of our reach."

"You are certain he went on that vessel?" cried Tom.

"Yes. He went as a passenger, under the name of Robert Brown."

"And did he take the jewels and money with him?"

"More than likely. At any rate, we can find no trace of the jewels."

"Then that chase is done for," said Dick, "and we shall have to pocket our loss."

The detective was chagrined to think that he had tracked Dan Baxter only to lose him, and promised to see if anything more could be done in the matter.

But nothing could be done, as there was no telling when the Golden Wave would arrive at Australia, and what port the craft would first make.

"We have seen the last of Dan Baxter," said Sam.

But the youngest Rover was mistaken. They were to meet the bully again, and under circumstances as astonishing as they were perilous.

CHAPTER IV

GOOD TIMES AT SANTA BARBARA

"What a land of plenty!"

It was Tom who made the remark.

The Rover boys were on their way to Santa Barbara, after having spent three weeks at San Francisco and vicinity. They had received word that Dora Stanhope and her mother and the two Laning girls were at the fashionable watering place, and they were anxious to meet their old friends.

On sped the luxurious train, over hills and through the valleys, past heavy woodlands and by rich fruit farms. It was a scene which interested them greatly, and they never tired of sitting at the windows, gazing out.

Presently the car door opened and a tall young fellow, carrying a valise, stepped inside and walked down the aisle. As he came closer Dick Rover leaped up.

"Bob Sutter!" he cried, with a smile of pleasure. "Who would ever dream of meeting you out here?"

"Is it really Dick Rover?" questioned the newcomer, as he shook hands. "And Tom and Sam, too! I must be dreaming. Is Putnam Hall on its travels?"

"We are on our travels," replied Tom, also shaking hands, followed by Sam. "But what are you doing here?"

Bob Sutter, a former scholar at Putnam Hall, smiled broadly.

"I live in California now. My father is interested in real estate in Los Angeles, Ventura, and Santa Barbara. Our home is in Santa Barbara."

"That is where we are going," came from Sam.

"What are you doing just traveling around?"

"Yes; we thought we'd put in time until the Hall opens again."

"I heard it had been closed. Too bad! If you are going to Santa Barbara, you must call and see me by all means," went on Bob Sutter.

"To be sure we will," said Tom, and his brothers nodded.

"We were going down there now to call on the Stanhopes," said Dick. "They have come here for the benefit of Mrs. Stanhope's health, and Nellie and Grace Laning are with them. I guess you know them all."

"I know the Laning girls, and I think I did meet Miss Stanhope once—at a football game. I'll be glad to meet them again. But tell me about yourselves."

Bob Sutter sat down, and soon all were talking at a lively rate. The newcomer was astonished to hear of the doings of Dan Baxter.

"The Baxters always were a hard crowd," he said. "I hope you'll get back your stuff some time."

It was late at night when Santa Barbara was reached, yet many of the hotels were a blaze of light from top to bottom. At the depot the Rover boys parted with Bob Sutter, but promised to call upon him in a day or two.

"I've got a fine yacht," said Bob Sutter. "Some time I want to take you for a trip."

"Just what we were wishing for!" cried Tom. "Just name your time, that's all."

"How will next Monday suit?"

"Will your yacht hold us?" asked Sam.

"The Old Glory will hold ten passengers on a pinch," answered Bob Sutter.

"Then you don't sail the craft alone."

"I can sail her in fair weather. But father makes me take an old sailor named Jerry Tolman along with me. Jerry is a character—a regular old salt, and I love to have his company. And that makes me think! Why can't we make up a party and go out? You can bring the three girls you are going to visit, and I can bring my cousin, Mary Parloe."

"Now you are talking!" shouted Sam. "What a jolly trip it will be!"

The proposal met with immediate approval, and it was decided that the boys should meet not later than Saturday afternoon to complete arrangements.

The Rover boys had received word that Mrs. Stanhope had rented a furnished cottage not far from one of the leading hotels. The lady was very nervous, and did not like too much noise and confusion about her. Meals were brought in from the hotel, which made it very pleasant.

When the three boys drove up in a carriage from the depot, three girls came rushing out to greet them. The three were Dora Stanhope and her two cousins, Nellie and Grace Laning.

"So here you are at last!" cried Dora Stanhope, as she gave Dick's hand a tight squeeze.

"We almost made up our mind you had missed the train," said Nellie Laning to Tom, giving him a bright smile as she spoke.

"How fine you are looking," said Grace to Sam. "Traveling must agree with you."

"Traveling does agree with us," said Sam.

"We would have been here sooner, only we stopped to talk to an old schoolmate," said Dick, and then he told about Bob Sutter.

"Oh, I remember Bob Sutter," said Nellie. "We went on a straw-ride together once—before you came to Putnam Hall," she added, to Tom.

"I know him, too," put in Grace. "He's a nice boy."

"Of course he is," said Sam pointedly.

"But he isn't as nice as some boys," went on Grace in a lower tone, and giving Sam an arch smile that made him feel very happy.

They were soon in the cottage and greeting Mrs. Stanhope, who had been lying on a couch. The lady greeted them in a motherly way that made them feel more at home than ever. She thought a great deal of the Rover boys, and especially of Dick, and did not object in the least to the marked attention Dick bestowed upon her only child. As my old readers know, the Rover boys had, in the past, done mother and daughter more than one valuable service.

The boys were fortunate in obtaining rooms in the hotel close to the cottage, which would make it possible for them to run in and out as they pleased.

"It's like old times to be together again," said Tom, when he and his brothers were retiring that night. "And, as Mrs. Stanhope is feeling so well, I guess we can have lots of fun."

And fun they did have. There were bathing in the surf, and lawn tennis, and dancing at the hotel in the evening, and also lovely walks and drives, and once they went out on horseback to a large fruit farm some miles away, and were royally entertained by some of Bob Sutter's friends. Bob Sutter and his cousin, Mary Parloe, went along, and proved first-class company.

The idea of a trip on Bob's yacht suited everybody, and it was decided that the whole party should go out early Monday morning, taking old

Jerry Tolman with them. They were to load down well with provisions and visit not only several points along the coast, but also one or two of the islands lying twenty-five to thirty miles south of Santa Barbara.

The Rover boys had already inspected the Old Glory and found her to be a first-class yacht in every respect. The craft was about sixty feet in length and correspondingly broad of beam. She carried a tall mast, but the lead in her keel was amply sufficient to keep her from going over unless under full sail in a very heavy wind. The cabin was fairly large and richly furnished, for the Sutters were a family of means, and desired everything of the best.

If the boys liked the yacht they also liked the man who had charge of her, bluff and hearty Jerry Tolman—Captain Jerry, as Bob Sutter called him. He was truly an old salt, having sailed the ocean since his tenth year, on both whalers and merchantmen. Captain Jerry lacked a book education, but he was naturally shrewd, and far from being a fool.

"Downright glad to meet ye, my hearties," he said, when the boys were brought on board. And he gave each hand a grip like that of iron. "Want to look over my lady, eh? Well, she's a putty one to inspect, take my word on't." And he showed them over the craft with pleasure. They found the yacht clean "as a whistle," and each particular bit of brasswork polished like a mirror.

By Saturday evening all was ready for the trip. On Sunday morning the Rover boys went to church with the Stanhopes and the Lanings, and rested in the afternoon.

They were just about to go to supper, when a note came for Dick. It was from Bob Sutter, and ran as follows:

"MY DEAR DICK: My cousin and I have been in an accident. We went driving to church this morning and the horse ran away and threw us both out on the rocks. Miss Parloe had her collar bone broken, and I broke my left ankle. Kindly come and see me if you can."

"An accident!" cried Tom. "That is too bad."

"Let us all go and see him," suggested Sam, and this plan was carried out.

They found that Bob Sutter was resting easily on his bed. The doctor had set the broken ankle, and put it in plaster, and he had told Bob that he must keep quiet for several weeks.

"This ends that yacht trip, so far as I am concerned," said Bob ruefully.

"Never mind, we can wait until you get well," said Dick cheerfully, although he did not expect' to remain at Santa Barbara more than ten days longer.

"No, I don't want you to wait," answered Bob Sutter. "My cousin won't be well, so they tell me, for several months, and I won't want to go without her. I've been thinking that you had better take the trip without us. Captain Jerry can easily run the yacht with your aid."

"That's very kind of you," said Tom. "But we'd rather have you along."

The matter was talked over for an hour. The Rover boys knew that Dora, Nellie, and Grace would be sorely disappointed if the yacht trip was given up. At last they decided to accept Bob Sutter's kind suggestion and make the trip without the company of the young owner and his cousin; and then they withdrew, wishing Bob a speedy recovery.

CHAPTER V

ON BOARD OF THE YACHT

"What a glorious day for the trip!"

"We are going to turn real sailors, aren't we?"

"Can't I help pull up a sail or something, Tom?"

Such were the remarks of Dora, Nellie, and Grace as they boarded the Old Glory early on Monday morning.

The boys and Captain Jerry were there to receive them, having arrived an hour before, to see that all the provisions were stowed away, and that the craft was in prime condition for sailing. By a curious combination of circumstances Bob Sutter had ordered far more provisions than were necessary for such a short trip, but Captain Jerry had found a place for everything, remarking that they might come in useful after all, but never dreaming how useful, as later events were to prove.

Mrs. Stanhope had come down in a carriage to see them off. She kissed all of the girls an affectionate good-by.

"Have a good time," she said. "And be sure and come back safe and sound."

"Don't ye worry but what I'll bring 'em back safe enough, ma'am," said Captain Jerry, as he tipped his cap respectfully.

When the girls were safe on board, the boys waved an adieu to Mrs. Stanhope. Then they ranged up in a row in front of old Jerry and each touched his forelock and gave a hitch to his trowser leg.

"Ready for orders, cap'n," they said, in unison, having practiced this little by-play in secret.

"Wh—what?" stammered Captain Jerry, gazing at them in bewilderment.

"Ready for orders, sir," they said.

"Shall we shake out the mainsail?" asked Dick.

"Shall I hoist the jib?" came from Tom.

"Can I set the topsail, captain?" put in Sam.

"Well, by the son o' Neptune!" gasped Captain Jerry. "Got a real, generwine crew, aint I? All right, my hearties, I'll set ye to work fast enough." And then followed a string of orders in true nautical style, and the Rover boys flew in one direction and another to execute them. Up went the mainsail and the jib, and the top-sail followed, and soon the Old Glory was standing off into Santa Barbara Channel, with Mrs. Stanhope in the carriage waving them an adieu, and the girls and the boys waving their handkerchiefs in return.

It certainly was a glorious day, as Dora had said, and after the sails were set, there was nothing to do but to take it easy on the cushions of the rail seats. Captain Jerry was at the wheel, but he promised to let each of them "take a trick" in his place before the trip should come to an end.

"I jest wish we had another yacht to race with," said the old sailor. "Then I could show ye what sort o' a clean pair o' heels the Old Glory could show the other craft."

"It is easy to see the yacht is speedy," replied Dick. "She cuts the water like a thing of life. And you know just how to get her best speed out of her," he went on, a remark that pleased old Jerry very much.

"Will we have more breeze, do you think?" asked Tom, later on, as he observed some in clouds to the westward.

"Can't say as to that, lad. Those clouds may come this way and they may blow north'ard. If they come down here, we'll catch it putty lively."

"I like a good, stiff breeze," came from Sam.

"Oh, don't run us into a storm," cried Grace in alarm. "We might all get seasick."

"Don't be alarmed," said Dick. "We are a very long way from a storm, to my way of thinking."

The morning passed quickly enough, and at noon they ran into a small harbor on one of the islands and had dinner in true picnic style. At one o'clock they packed up once more, went on board of the Old Glory, and stood off to the westward, for all wanted a run "right on the ocean," as Tom expressed it.

Captain Jerry was just a bit doubtful of the trip, for the clouds in the western sky had grown considerably larger than when first noticed. Not that he did not think the yacht could weather a blow, but he was afraid the young ladies would get seasick. However, as he did not wish to put a damper on their fun, he said nothing, resolved to turn back at the first sign of any "inward upsettin'," as he expressed it.

The breeze had increased, and as it was directly from off shore the Old Glory bowled along merrily over the waves. Nobody showed the least sign of seasickness, and they talked, laughed, and sang as if they had not a care in the world. Tom also did some fishing, and caught a string of the finny tribe, of which he was justly proud.

"You can bake them for us when we get back," he said to Nellie. "And then we can all have a fish party."

"I could go on sailing like this for a week," said Dick to Dora, as they moved forward. "I mean if you were along with me," he added, in a lower tone, and she gave him a look that meant a good deal.

When three o'clock came Captain Jerry announced that they must turn back. They were far out of sight of land, with nothing but the blue ocean around them. Overhead the sky was still clear, but the clouds on the horizon were rapidly increasing.

"Oh, let us keep on a while longer," pleaded Tom. "This is just glorious!" And the others said the same.

So they kept on, although somewhat against Captain Jerry's better judgment. The old sailor was watching the clouds. Presently there came an extra heavy puff of wind, and then the clouds seemed to rush up with lightning-like rapidity.

"Got to go back, now," said the sailor. "Going to have a big blow afore night." And he threw over the tiller and gave the necessary commands to change the sails.

"By Jove, but those clouds are coming up fast!" exclaimed Dick, after a careful survey. "I ever saw them come up like that on the Atlantic, or on the Great Lakes."

"It's unusual," replied Captain Jerry, with a shake of his head. "Never seen it afore myself. The wind is coming around, too. It's goin' to be a different storm from what we generally git around these waters."

The black clouds soon obscured the sun, and the wind began to blow stronger than ever, sending the whitecaps rolling over the ocean, and causing the spray to fly over the deck of the yacht. Nellie clutched Tom by the arm.

"Oh, Tom, what does this mean?" she asked in a trembling voice.

"It means that we are going to have a storm, that's all," he answered as lightly as he could.

"But—but will it hurt us?" came from Grace.

"I don't think so," put in Sam. "But we may get wet, unless we go into the cabin."

"I vote the girls all go into the cabin," said Dick. "Sam can go with them if he wants to. Tom, you and I can stay on deck to look after the sails."

"I'm going to do my duty on deck, too," came from Sam promptly.

Another rush of wind now sent the spray flying in all directions, and to keep from being drenched the girls retired to the tiny cabin, or, rather, cuddy, of which the Old Glory boasted.

"I am sure it is going to be an awful storm," said Dora. "I wish we were safe on land once more."

"Oh, dear! do you think we'll go to the bottom?" asked Nellie.

"The boys won't let the yacht go down," answered Dora. "They are all good sailors, and Captain Jerry must know all about handling this craft. But we may have a very bad time of it before we get back to Santa Barbara."

It was dark in the cabin, but the yacht pitched and plunged so violently that they were afraid to light the lantern. So they huddled together, each holding another's hand.

On deck Captain Jerry gave orders to lower the topsail and haul in the jib. Several reefs were also taken in the mainsail, and the boys stood ready to bring down the rest of the sheet with a rush at the first word from the old sailor.

"It's a re-markable storm—re-markable," said Captain Jerry, chewing vigorously on the quid of tobacco in his cheek. "Aint never seen no sech storm here afore. Puts me in mind o' a blow I stood out in onct off the coast o' Alaska when I was in a whaler. Thet storm caught us same time as this an' ripped our mast out in a jiffy and drowned two o' the sailors."

"I hope nothing like that happens to us," said Dick, with a shudder. He was not thinking of himself, but of the three girls in the cabin.

"Well, lad, it aint goin' to be no easy blow, I kin tell ye that," responded Captain Jerry.

Soon the wind began to whistle shrilly through the air, and the sky became so black they could scarcely see a hundred yards in any direction, Then came some distant flashes of lightning and rolling thunder, and soon the patter of rain.

"Now we are going to catch it," said Tom, and he was right. Ten minutes later it was pouring in torrents, and the rain continued to keep coming down as if there was to be no end of it.

"Boys, aren't you most drowned?" asked Nellie, peeping out of the cabin door.

"No, but you'll be if you come out here," called back Tom.

"We can't stand up and we can't sit still," came from Grace.

"Sorry, but you'll have to make the best of it," answered Sam.

"Oh, we won't mind, if only we reach shore in safety," put in Dora, and then the door was closed again.

On and on swept the Old Glory, through the wind, the rain, and the darkness. As there was no land near, Captain Jerry paid his whole attention to making the yacht ride easily, an almost impossible task in such a sea as was now raging.

Suddenly from somewhere out of the air came a humming sound. It grew louder and louder, and the boys felt a strange suction of wind which made them hold tightly to the rail for fear of being pulled overboard by some uncanny force. There followed a loud snap and a crash, and the mast began to come down.

"Look out for the mast!" screamed Captain Jerry, and all jumped just in the nick of time. Down came the stick, to strike the rail and shatter it like a pipe stem, and then lay over the deck and over the waves beyond.

CHAPTER VI

ADRIFT ON THE PACIFIC OCEAN

"The mast has gone by the board!" screamed Dick, on rising to his feet.

"That stick will turn the yacht over!" gasped Tom.

Poor Sam could not speak, for a wave had struck him full in the mouth, and he had all he could do to keep from being washed overboard.

The girls in the cabin heard the crash above the roaring of the elements, and let up a scream of alarm.

"Are we going down?"

"Shall we come out on deck?"

"Stay where ye are!" shouted back Captain Jerry, clinging to the wheel with a grip of steel. Then he turned to Dick: "Can ye git an ax and clear away the wreck?"

"I'll try it," replied the eldest Rover, and he moved cautiously to where an ax rested in a holder. Soon he had the article in hand, and was chopping away as fast as he could, while Tom, holding to the bottom of the mast with one hand, held Dick with the other. Sam, in the meantime, cut away some.. cordage with a hatchet which was handy.

It was truly a perilous moment, and it looked as if the mighty waves would swamp the Old Glory before the wreckage could be cleared away. The girls stood at a cabin window watching the work and ready to leap out if the yacht should start to go down.

"There it goes!" cried Dick, at last, and gave another stroke with the ax. There followed a snap and a crack, and overboard slid the broken mast, carrying a mass of cordage with it.

At once the Old Glory righted herself, sending a small sheet of water flowing from one side of the deck to the other. Some of the water swept into the cabin, and the girls were alarmed more than ever.

"A good job done that it's overboard," said Captain Jerry. "Another plunge or two and we would have gone over, sure pop!"

With the wreckage cleared away the boys breathed more freely. But the peril was still extreme, for it was no easy matter to keep the craft from taking the mighty waves broadside. But the force of the wind drove them on, and Captain Jerry handled the wheel as only a veteran tar could.

"I guess it's a hurricane," was Tom's comment.

"Looks more like a cyclone to me," spluttered Sam. "I'd give a good deal to be out of it."

To keep from, being swamped they had to run out to sea. This was no pleasant prospect to the boys, but it could not be helped.

"We needn't tell the girls," said Dick. "It will only worry them more, without doing any good."

Two hours went by, and the storm kept on as madly as ever. Night was now coming on, and soon it was impossible to see a hundred feet in any direction. The yacht's lanterns were lit, and one was hoisted on a stick which Dick nailed to the stump of the mast.

"We've got to, have some sort o' light," said Captain Jerry. "If not, we may run afoul o' some other craft."

The time went by slowly, each hour seeming an age. Nobody felt like eating, and nothing was said about supper until nearly nine o'clock, when Dora opened the cabin door and called Dick:

"We thought we would get to shore before eating," she said. "How much longer will we be out, do you think?"

"There is no telling, Dora," he replied evasively.

"No telling? Doesn't Captain Jerry know where we are?"

"Hardly. You see it is so dark, and we can't make any headway with the mast gone."

"How stupid of me! I should have known that. Shall we try to fix up some supper?"

"You might pass some sandwiches. But, no, we had better come down, one at a time," returned Dick.

This suggestion was carried out, Captain Jerry being the last to go down, leaving the wheel in the hands of Dick and Tom.

"Don't ye let it git away from ye," was his caution. "If ye do it will be good-by, 'Liza Jane, an' all of us goin' slam bang to Davy Jones' locker!"

From old Jerry the girls learned that they would probably have to remain on the yacht all night.

"Don't ye git alarmed," he said. "The storm's goin' down, an' we'll come out all right when the sun rises."

The prospect of remaining on the ocean all night was dismaying, and all of the girls wondered what Mrs. Stanhope would say when they did not return.

"I know mother will be very much worried," said Dora soberly.

It was decided by the boys that they should take turns at lying down, each being given two hours in which to rest. Sam was the first to turn in, but it is doubtful if he slept to any extent. Tom followed, and then came Dick. Captain Jerry declined, stating he could sleep when he had the party safe on shore once more.

By morning the storm had taken another turn. It no longer rained, but the sky was murky, and there was a dense fog, which the wind blew first in one direction, and then another. They were still running to sea, with small prospect of being able to turn back.

"This is certainly more than I bargained for," observed Dick to Tom, in a low voice. "To me it looks mighty serious."

"Oh, the storm is bound to go down."

"Yes, Tom, but how long do you suppose the provisions and water will last?"

At this question Tom's face fell.

"I hadn't thought of that, Dick. I don't suppose we have more than enough for to-day, have we?"

"Well, we might make it last two days on a pinch—we brought quite a lot along. But after that—"

"Do you think we'll have to stay out here more than two days?" demanded
Sam.

"I don't know what to think, Sam."

"Can't we rig up some sort of a jury-mast?"

"Captain Jerry mentioned that. We'll try."

There was no stick on board of the *Old Glory* outside of the bowsprit, and at last they decided to saw this off and put it up as a small mast.

The task was no easy one, and just as the temporary mast was being fitted into place there came an extra heavy puff of wind which sent the yacht far over on her side.

"Hold fast, all of ye!" roared Captain Jerry, and they obeyed, and the stick went rolling over the side and out of sight in the billows.

"Gone!" gasped Tom. "That ends putting up another mast."

Slowly the day wore along. The girls were silent, and if the truth be told more than one tear was shed between them, although before the boys they tried to put on a brave face. There were no regular meals, and by the advice of Captain Jerry and Dick they were sparing of the provisions and the water.

"Our only hope now is for the storm to go down, or else to sight some passing ship," said Dick. "Getting back to Santa Barbara at present is out of the question. For all we know, we may be a hundred or two hundred miles from the coast."

About two o'clock in the afternoon the sky cleared a little. But as the fog lifted, the wind blew with greater force, sending them reeling and plunging into the mighty waves.

"It looks as if we should be swamped after all," said Tom dolefully.

"Never say die, Tom," came from Sam resolutely.

"I suppose Mrs. Stanhope will be worried half to death."

"No doubt of it."

Nobody had any heart to talk, and each watched eagerly for some sign of a sail. Tom had a spyglass, and just before sunset he let out a shout:

"A ship! A ship!"

"Where?" came from the others.

"Off in that direction," and Tom pointed with his hand.

All took a look through the glass, and saw that he was right. There was a steamer approaching.

"If only they see us." said Dick, and his brothers nodded.

The girls had heard the cry, and now came on deck to learn what it meant.

"Oh, I hope they take us on board and back home," said Nellie. "I must say I am heartily tired of this yacht."

The wind was increasing, and the girls had to go back to the cabin to keep from getting wet. The boys put up a flag, upside down, on a piece of planking, and waited eagerly for the steamer to come nearer.

"The yacht is settling," cried Dick, a little while later. "Don't you notice it?"

"The Old Glory has sprung some leaks," responded Captain Jerry sadly.
"Take the wheel while I go and look them over."

Tom and Sam, took the wheel, while old Jerry and Dick inspected the leaks. They soon reported that two seams had opened at the bow, and that there was a bad break at the stern, which was bound soon to interfere with the rudder.

"I believe that steamer is going to leave us!" cried Sam, a little while later.

"Oh, don't say that," said Dick. "We must signal her somehow."

"We'll fire some rockets," said Captain Jerry.

This was done, and a little later they saw that the steamer was heading in their direction. By this time the Old Glory showed unmistakable signs of being on the point of foundering, and the girls were told to come on deck. Everybody was given a life preserver, which had been kept close at hand since the beginning of the trouble.

"We are seen!" cried Sam joyously, as a signal came from the steamer.

Gradually the strange vessel drew closer, and they saw that she was a rather clumsy affair of the "tramp" pattern, used to carry all sorts of cargoes from one port to another.

"They are lowering a small boat," said Sam, a little later.

"I wish they would hurry," returned Tom, in a low voice. "I believe this yacht is going to go down very soon."

At last the small boat was close enough to be hailed, and preparations were made for transferring the girls first.

It was no easy matter to make the change, and it took a good quarter of an hour to land the girls on the steamer's deck.

By this time the Old Glory was completely water-logged.

"We have got to jump for it, lads!" cried Captain Jerry, "unless you want to go down with her!"

And jump they did, into the mighty waves, and none too soon, for a minute later the yacht went down, out of their sight forever.

The small boat was not far away, and soon Sam and Tom were picked up. To get Dick and Captain Jerry was not so easy, but the task was finally accomplished, and soon all of our friends stood on the deck of the tramp steamer, safe and sound once more.

CHAPTER VII

DISMAYING NEWS

"Thank fortune we got away from the yacht just in time!" exclaimed Tom, as he shook the water from his clothes.

"I'm sorry to see the Old Glory go," said Captain Jerry sadly. "I thought a heap o' that craft, I did. It will be sorry news to take back to Master Bob."

"Never mind, we'll help pay for the loss," put in Dick.

"Where are you folks from?" questioned the captain of the steamer, as he came up to, the crowd.

"We came from Santa Barbara. The storm took our mast, and blew us out to sea," answered Dick. "We owe you something for, picking us up."

"You're welcome for what I've done," answered Captain, Fairleigh. "Come with me, and I'll try to get you some dry clothing. I can trick out the men folks, and the young ladies will have to see my wife, who happens to be with me on this trip."

"What steamer is this?" asked Tom.

"The Tacoma, lad."

"Are you bound for San Francisco?" questioned Sam.

"No, we are bound for Honolulu, on the Hawaiian Islands."

"Honolulu!" burst out the others.

"Do you mean to say that the first port you will make will be Honolulu?" demanded Dick.

"That's my orders, lad. I must get there just as quick as I can, too, for a cargo of sugar."

"But we don't want to go to the Hawaiian Islands!" put in Dora. "Mercy! It's two thousand miles away!"

At this Captain Fairleigh shrugged his broad shoulders.

"I am sorry for you, but I can't put back, miss. Perhaps we'll meet some vessel bound for some port in the United States. If so, I can ask the captain to take you back."

"And if you don't meet any vessel?" came from Grace.

"Oh, I think we'll pass some vessel," returned the captain.

He took the girls and introduced them to, his wife, and then turned the boys and old Jerry over to the first mate, who obtained for them some dry clothing. After this all were provided with a hot supper, which did much toward making them comfortable, at least physically speaking.

But not one of them was comfortable mentally. To be carried to the Hawaiian Islands, two thousand miles away, was no pleasant thought. Besides, what would their folks think of their prolonged absence?

"Mother will think that we have all been drowned," said Dora.

"And that is what our folks will think, too," said Nellie. "Oh, it is terrible, simply terrible!" And she wrung her little hands.

By making inquiries Dick learned that the steamer was expected to reach Honolulu inside of two weeks, if the weather was not too, bad. From Honolulu they could get passage to San Francisco on the mail steamer, the trip lasting exactly seven days.

"We'll have to get some money first," said Tom. "And we can't cable for it, either," he went on, for the cable to the Hawaiian Islands from the United States had not yet been laid.

"Let us hope that we will see some ship that will take us back," said Sam.

Day after day they watched eagerly for a passing sail. But though they sighted four vessels and hailed them, not one was bound for the United States, outside of a whaler, and that craft intended to stay out at least three months longer before making for port.

"We are booked for this trip, and no mistake," sighed Tom. "Well, since that is so, let us make the best of it."

The Tacoma was heavily laden, and though the storm cleared away and the Pacific Ocean became moderately calm, she made but slow progress.

"Our boilers are not in the best of condition," said Captain Fairleigh.

"I trust there is no danger of their blowing up," returned Dick.

"Not if we don't force them too much."

It had been arranged that the boys and girls should pay a fair price for the trip to Honolulu, the money to, be sent to the captain of the Tacoma later on. As for old Jerry, he signed articles to work his passage to the Hawaiian Islands and back again. As Captain Fairleigh was rather short of hands he was glad to have the old sailor join his crew.

The days slipped by, and, having recovered from the effects of the storm, the Rover boys became as light hearted as ever. Tom was particularly full of pranks.

"No use of crying over spilt milk," he declared. "Let us be thankful the pitcher wasn't broken, or, in other words, that we are not at this moment at the bottom of the Pacific."

"Right you are," replied Sam.

There was an old piano on board, and the boys and girls often amused themselves at this, singing and playing. As there were no other passengers, they had the freedom of the ship.

"This would be real jolly," said Tom, "if it wasn't that the folks at home must be worried," and then he began to sing, for he really could not be sad:

"A life on the ocean wave,
A home on the rolling deep,
A house in a watery cave—
Where I might rest in sleep!"

"Did you ever hear such a song?" cried Nellie, and Tom went on:

"The boy stood on the burning deck,
Munching apples by the peck;
The captain yelled, he stood stock-still,
For of those apples he wanted his fill!"

"Tom Rover!" burst out Dora. "I believe you would sing at your own funeral!" And Tom continued gayly:

"Sailing, sailing, over the bounding main,
For many a stormy wind shall blow,
Ere the Rovers get home again!"

"Tom lives on songs," said Sam slyly. "He'd rather sing than eat a pie."

"Pie!" thundered Tom tragically. "Who said pie? I haven't seen a home-made pie since—since—"

"The time you went down in the pantry at midnight and ate two," finished Dick, and then there was a burst of laughter.

"Never mind, Tom, I'll make you half a dozen pies—when we get home," came from Nellie.

"Will you really?" said Tom, and then he began once more, as gayly as ever:

"You can give me pudding
And give me cake,
And anything else
You care to bake;
But if you wish
To charm my eye,
Just hand me over
Some home-made pie!"

"That's all right," said Dick. "But in place of eye you should have said stomach."

"Stomach doesn't rhyme with pie," snorted 'Tom. "I'm a true poet and I know what I am doing."

"Talking about pie makes me think of pie-plates," said Sam. "Let us play spinning the plate on deck. It will be lots of fun trying to catch the plate while it is spinning and the steamer is rolling."

"Good!" cried Grace, and ran to get a plate from the cook's galley. Soon they were playing merrily, and the game served to make an hour pass pleasantly. When the forfeits had to be redeemed, the girls made the boys do several ridiculous things. Tom had to hop from one end of the deck to the other on one foot, Sam had to stand on his head, and recite "Mary had a Little Lamb," and Dick had to go to three of the sailors and ask each if they would tie the ship to a post during the night.

"I'll wager you are a merry crowd on land," .said Captain Fairleigh, as he paused to watch the fun. "Takes me back to the time when I was a boy," and he laughed heartily. Even the captain's wife was amused. She was particularly fond of music, and loved to listen to the playing and singing.

The days slipped by one after the other, until Captain Fairleigh announced that forty-eight hours more ought to bring them in sight of Diamond Head, a high hill at the entrance to Honolulu harbor.

But another storm was at hand, and that night the wind blew more fiercely than ever. The Tacoma tossed and pitched to such a degree that standing on the deck was next to impossible, and all of the boys and the girls gathered in the cabin and held fast to the posts and the stationary seats.

"It feels as if the steamer would roll clear over," said Sam. "Here we go again!"

There was thunder and lightning, and soon a deluge of rain, fully as heavy as that experienced while on board of the ill-fated Old Glory. This continued all of the night, and in the morning the storm seemed to grow worse instead of better.

"We are in a run of bad luck," said Dick. "I really believe we will have all sorts of trouble before we get back to the United States."

Toward noon a mist came up, and it grew dark. Lanterns were lit, and the Tacoma felt her way along carefully, for Captain Fairleigh knew that they were now in the track of considerable shipping.

By nightfall the steamer lay almost at a stand-still, for the mist was thicker than ever. For safety the whistle was sounded at short intervals.

The girls were the first to retire, and the boys followed half an hour later. The staterooms of all were close together.

Dick Rover was the last to go to sleep. How long he slept he did not know.

He awoke with a start. A shock had thrown him to the floor of the stateroom, and down came Sam on top of him. There were hoarse cries from the deck, a shrill steam whistle, and the sound of a fog horn, and

then a grinding thud and a bump that told the Tacoma had either run into some other ship or into the rocks.

CHAPTER VIII

FROM ONE SHIP TO ANOTHER

"We struck something!"

"What is the matter?"

"Are we going down?"

These and a score of other cries rang out on board the steamer. The thumping and bumping continued, followed by a crashing that could mean but one thing—that the ship was being splintered, and that her seams were being laid wide open.

As soon as possible the Rover boys slipped into some clothing and went on deck. They were quickly followed by the three girls, who clung tight to them in terror.

"Oh, Dick, this is the worst yet!" came from Dora. "What will be the end?"

"The Tacoma is sinking!" was the cry from out of the darkness.

"Are we really sinking?" gasped Nellie as she clutched Tom.

"Yes, we are," came from Sam. "Can't you feel the deck settling?"

They could, only too plainly, and in a minute more the water seemed to be running all around them. The cries continued, but it was so black they could see next to nothing.

What happened in the next few minutes the Rover boys could scarcely tell, afterward. An effort was made to get out a life-boat, and it disappeared almost as soon as it left the side, carrying some sailors with it. Then some red-fire blazed up, lighting up the tragic scene, and

revealing a schooner standing close by the steamer. The sailing vessel had her bowsprit broken and part of her forward rail torn away.

"If we must die, let us die together!" said Dick, and they kept together as well as they could. Old Jerry was with them, and said he would do all he could for them. He had already passed around life-preservers, and these they put on with all possible speed.

Then followed a sudden plunge of the steamer and all found themselves in the waves of the ocean. They went down together, each holding the hand of somebody else. When they came up, Tom was close to a life-line thrown from the sailing vessel and this he clutched madly.

"Haul us in!" he yelled. "Haul us in!" And the line was pulled in with care, and after ten minutes of extreme peril the boys and the girls and Captain Jerry found themselves on board of the sailing vessel, which proved to be a large three-masted schooner.

All of our friends were so exhausted that they had to be carried to the cabin and here Dora and Grace fainted away completely, while Nellie was little better off. Tom had had his left arm bruised and Dick was suffering from an ugly scratch on the forehead. It was fully an hour before any of them felt like moving around.

In the meantime the two vessels had separated, and though red fire was burned twice, after that, and rockets sent up, nothing more was seen or heard of the Tacoma or those left on board.

"But I don't think she went down," said Captain Jerry. "She was too well built for that." And he was right, as events proved. Much crippled the steamer two days later entered Honolulu harbor, where she was laid up for repairs.

Worn out completely by what they had passed through, the boys slept heavily for the rest of the night, not caring what ship they were on or where they were going. Everybody was busy with the wreckage, so they were left almost entirely to themselves.

Tom was the first to get up, and going on deck found that the storm had cleared away and that the sun was shining brightly. Without delay he halted a sailor who happened to be passing.

"What ship is this?" he questioned.

"Dis ship da *Golden Wave*," replied the sailor, who was a Norwegian.

"And where are you bound?"

"Da ship sail for Australia."

"Great Scott! Australia!" gasped Tom. "This is the worst yet."

"What's up, Tom?" asked Sam, who had followed his brother.

"This sailor tells me this ship is bound for Australia."

"Why, that is thousands of miles away!"

"I know it."

"If we go to Australia, we'll never get back."

"Not quite as bad as that, Sam. But we certainly don't want to go to Australia."

"Who is the captain?"

"Captain Blossom," replied the sailor. "Where is he?"

The sailor said he would take them to the captain and did so. He proved to be a burly fellow with rather a sober-looking face.

"Got around at last, eh?" he said, eying Tom and Sam shrewdly.

"We have, and we must thank you for rescuing us," replied Tom.

"That's all right."

"One of your sailors tells me you are bound for Australia," put in Sam.

"He told you the truth."

"Won't you stop at some port in the Hawaiian Islands?"

"No."

"But you might put us off."

"Can't spare the time. As it is, this storm blew me away out of my course," answered Captain Blossom.

He had a twofold reason for not putting them ashore at or near Honolulu. It would not only take time, but it might also lead to questioning concerning the fate of the steamer, and he was afraid he would be hauled into some marine court for running into the Tacoma, for that was what he had done.

"Do you know anything about the steamer?" asked Sam.

"No, she got away from us in the darkness, after we hauled seven of you aboard."

"The steamer lost some of her crew," said Tom, shuddering. "Did you lose any men?"

"One sailor, and one of my passengers got hurt in the leg by the collision."

By this time Dick joined the party, followed by old Jerry and the three girls.

"Will the captain carry us away to Australia?" asked Dora, when the situation was explained.

"I suppose so," said Dick soberly. "If I had some money I might buy him off, but I haven't a dollar. What little I did have I left on board of the Tacoma."

The others were equally destitute, and when Captain Blossom heard of this his face grew dark. He was a close man, and his first mate, Jack Lesher, was no better.

"If you haven't any money, you'll have to work your passage," he growled. "I can't afford to carry you to Australia for nothing."

"Then let us off at some port in the Hawaiian Islands," said Tom.

"Can't do it, I told you," retorted Captain Blossom angrily. "And you'll either work while you are on board or starve."

"My, what a Tarter!" whispered Sam.

"Well, we'll work," said Dick. "But you must not force the young ladies to do anything."

"I'm a sailor and will do my full share," said old Jerry. But he did not like the situation any better than did the Rovers.

The matter was talked over, and seeing that they were willing to work, Captain Blossom became a little milder in his manner. He said he would give the three girls one of the staterooms, but the boys and old Jerry would have to join the crew in the forecastle.

Fortunately the sailors on board the *Golden Wave* were a fairly clean lot, so the forecastle was not so dirty a place as it might otherwise have been. The boys did not like to be separated from the girls, however, and Dick called the girls aside to talk the matter over.

"I want to know if anything goes wrong," said he. "If there is the least thing out of the way, let us know at once," and the girls promised to keep their eyes open.

Once in the forecastle the boys were given three rough suits of clothes to wear while working. Then they were called out to work without delay, for the storm had left much to do on board the Golden Wave.

"We have only one passenger," said one of the sailors, in reply to a question from Tom.. "He is a young fellow named Robert Brown. He was hurt during the storm, but I reckon he's all right now."

Tom was set to coiling some rope and Sam and Dick had to scrub down the deck. This was by no means an agreeable task, but nobody complained.

"We must take what comes," said Dick cheerfully. "So long as we get enough to eat and are not abused I shan't say a word."

The boys had been to work about an hour when Sam saw a young fellow limping around the other end of the deck. There was something strangely familiar about the party, and the youngest Rover drew closer to get a better look at him.

"Dan Baxter!" he cried in astonishment. "Dan Baxter!"

At this cry the person turned and his lower jaw dropped in equal astonishment.

"Who—er—where did you come from?" he stammered.

"So this is the vessel you shipped on?" went on Sam. And then he called out: "Dick! Tom! Come here."

For a brief instant Dan Baxter's face was a study. Then a crafty look came into his eyes and he drew himself up.

"Excuse me, but you have made a mistake in your man," he said coldly.

"What's that?" came from Sam in bewilderment.

"I am not the party you just named. My name is Robert Brown."

"It is?" came from the youngest Rover. "If that is so, you look exactly like somebody I know well."

By this time Dick and Tom came hurrying to the spot, followed by Dora, who happened to be on deck.

"Dan Baxter!" came from Tom and Dick simultaneously.

"He says he isn't Dan Baxter," said Sam.

"Isn't Dan Baxter? Why, Baxter, you fraud, what new wrinkle is this?" said Dick, catching him by the arm.

"Let go of me!" came fiercely from Baxter. "Let go, I say, or it will be the worse for you. You have made a mistake."

"No mistake about it," put in Tom. "He is Dan Baxter beyond a doubt."

CHAPTER IX

IN WHICH THE ENEMY IS CORNERED

The loud talking had attracted the attention of Captain Blossom, and now the master of the *Golden Wave* strode up to the crowd.

"What's going on here?" he demanded of the Rover boys. "Why are you not at work, as I ordered?"

"I have made an important discovery," answered Dick. "Is this your passenger, Captain Blossom?"

"He is. What of him?"

"He is a thief and ran away from San Francisco to escape the police."

"It's a falsehood!" roared Dan Baxter. "They have made a mistake. I am a respectable man just out of college, and my father, Doctor L. Z. Brown, is a well-known physician of Los Angeles. I am traveling to Australia for my health."

"His real name is Daniel Baxter and his father is now in prison," said Tom. "He robbed us of our money and some diamonds while we were stopping at a hotel in San Francisco. The detectives followed him up, but he slipped them by taking passage on your ship."

"I tell you my name is Brown—Robert Brown!" stormed Baxter. "This is some plot hatched up against me. Who are these fellows, anyway?" he went on, turning to the captain.

"They came from the steamer we ran into," answered Captain Blossom.

"I never saw them before."

At this moment Dora touched the captain on the shoulder.

"Please, captain," she said, "I knew Dan Baxter quite well and I am sure this young man is the same person."

"It aint so. I tell you, captain, it is a plot."

"What kind of a plot could it be?" asked Captain Blossom. He scarcely knew what to say.

"I don't know. Perhaps they want to get hold of my money," went on Baxter, struck by a sudden idea.

"That's right, we do want to get hold of the money!" cried Sam. "For it belongs to us—at least two hundred and seventy-five dollars of it—not counting what he may have got on the diamonds and the cuff buttons."

"You shan't touch my money!" screamed Baxter.

"Captain, he ought to be placed under arrest," said Dick.

Dora had gone back to the cabin and now she returned in great haste with Nellie and Grace.

"To be sure, that is Dan Baxter," said Nellie.

"There can be no mistake," put in Grace, "We all know him only too well."

"You see, Captain Blossom, that we are six to one," said Tom. "And you will surely believe the ladies."

"How is you all happen to know him so well?" demanded the captain curiously.

"We know him because we all went to school together," answered Dick. "These young ladies lived in the vicinity of the school. We had trouble with Baxter at school and later on out West, and ever since that time he has been trying to injure us. We met him in San Francisco in the hotel lobby and at night he went to our room, cut open a traveling bag

and unlocked our trunks and robbed us of two hundred and seventy-five dollars in cash, some diamond studs, a pair of cuff buttons, and some clothing."

"I've got an idea!" almost shouted Sam. "Maybe he has some of the stolen stuff in his stateroom."

"Yes, yes, let us search the stateroom: by all means!" exclaimed Tom.

"You shall not touch my room!" howled Baxter, turning pale. "I have nothing there but my own private property."

"If that is so, you shouldn't object to having the stateroom searched," observed Captain Blossom.

"If we get back our money we may be able to pay you something, captain, for our passage," said Dick.

This was a forceful argument and set Captain Blossom to thinking. He was a man who loved money dearly.

"I will go along and we will look around the stateroom," he said, after a pause.

"This is an outrage!" cried Dan Baxter. "I will have the law on you for it."

"Shut up! I am master on my own ship," retorted Captain Blossom, and led the way to the stateroom Dan Baxter occupied. The door was locked and Baxter refused to give up the key. But the captain had a duplicate, and soon he and the Rover boys were inside the room. Baxter followed them, still expostulating, but in vain.

"Here is a pocketbook full of bills!" cried Tom, bringing the article to light.

"Here is my light overcoat!" came from Dick. "See, it has my initials embroidered in the hanger. Aunt Martha did that for me."

"Here are my gold cuff buttons!" exclaimed Sam. "They were a present from my father and they have my monogram engraved on each." And he showed the articles to the captain.

"I reckon it's a pretty clear case against you," said Captain Blossom, turning to Dan Baxter.

"Here are half a dozen letters," said Tom, holding them up. "You can see they are all addressed to Daniel Baxter. That's his name, and he'd be a fool to deny it any longer."

"Well, I won't deny it," cried the big bully. "What would be the use—you are all against me—even the captain."

"I am not against you," retorted Captain Blossom. "But if you are a thief I want to know it. Why did you give me your name as Robert Brown?"

"That's my business." Baxter paused for a moment. "Now you have found me out, what are you going to do about it?" he went on brazenly. "You can't arrest me on shipboard."

"No, but we can have you arrested when we land," said Dick. "And in the meantime we will take charge of what is our own."

"Here are some pawn tickets for the diamonds," said Sam, who was continuing the search. "They show he got seventy-five dollars on them."

"We will keep the tickets—and the seventy-five dollars, too—if we can find the money," said Tom.

But the money could not be found, for the greater part had been turned over to Captain Blossom for Baxter's passage to Australia and the rest spent before leaving shore. The pocketbook contained only two hundred and thirty dollars.

"What did he pay you for the passage?" questioned Dick of the captain.

"One hundred dollars."

"Then you ought to turn that amount over to our credit."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"I mean that Dan Baxter has no right to a free passage on your ship, since he bought that passage with our money. Let him work his way and place that passage money to our credit."

"That's the way to talk," put in Tom. "Make him work by all means."

"He deserves good, hard labor," came from Sam.

"I don't think you can make me work!" burst out Dan Baxter. "I am a passenger and I demand that I be treated as such."

"You are an impostor!" returned Captain Blossom bluntly. "The fact that you used an assumed name proves it. If I wanted to do so, I could clap you in the ship's brig until we reach port and chain you into the bargain. I want no thieves on board my ship."

"Here is more of our clothing," came from Tom.

"Pick out all the things that are yours," said the captain. "And take the other things that are yours, too."

This was done, nobody paying any attention to Baxter's protests. When the Rovers had what there was of their things the captain turned to the bully.

"I've made up my mind about you," he said, speaking with great deliberation. "I am master here, and a judge and jury into the bargain. You can take your choice: Either sign articles as a foremast hand for the balance of the trip, or be locked up as a prisoner, on prison rations."

"Do you mean th—that?" gasped Baxter, turning pale.

"I do."

"But the passage money Goes to the credit of these young fellows."

"It's an outrage!"

"No, it's simply justice, to my way of thinking. I'll give you until to-morrow to make up your mind what you will do."

This ended the talk with Dan Baxter. The captain said he wanted to see the Rover boys in the cabin, and they followed him to that place.

"Captain, I feel I must thank you for your fair way of managing this affair," said Dick, feeling that a few good words at this point would not go amiss. "I hope you treat Baxter as he deserves."

"I will try to do right," was Captain Blossom's answer. "But what I want to know now is, What do you intend to do with that money? It seems to me I should be paid something for keeping you on board."

"I have a proposition to make, captain. We will give you two hundred dollars if you will allow us to consider ourselves passengers. And by 'us' I mean the young ladies as well as ourselves."

"It's not very much."

"If we pay you that amount it will leave us but thirty dollars, hardly enough with which to cable home for more. Of course, when we get our money in Australia we will pay you whatever balance is due you,—and something besides for saving us."

This pleased Captain Blossom and he said he would accept the offer. The matter was discussed for half an hour, and it was decided that the boys should have two staterooms, the one occupied by Baxter and another next to that given over to the girls.

When Dora, Nellie, and Grace heard of the new arrangement that had been made they were highly pleased.

"I didn't want to see you do the work of a common sailor," said Dora to Dick.

"Oh, it wouldn't kill me," he returned lightly. "Even as it is, I'll give a hand if it is necessary."

"It's a wonder Captain Blossom took to your offer so quickly."

"He loves money, that's why, Dora. He would rather have that two hundred dollars than our services," and with this remark Dick hit the nail squarely on the head.

CHAPTER X

A BLOW IN THE DARKNESS

It would be hard to describe Dan Baxter's feelings after Captain Blossom and the Rover boys left him alone in his stateroom. At one instant he was fairly shaking with rage, and at the next quaking with fear over what the future might hold in store for him.

"They have got the best of me again!" he muttered, clenching his fists. "And after I felt sure I had escaped them. It must have been Fate that made Captain Blossom pick them up. Now I've either got to work as a common sailor or submit to being locked up in some dark, foul-smelling hole on the ship. And when we get to Australia, unless I watch my chance to skip out, they'll turn me over to the police."

He could not sleep that night for thinking over the situation and was up and dressed before daylight. Strolling on deck, he came face to face with Sam, who had come up to get the morning air.

"I suppose you think you have got the best of me," growled Baxter.

"It looks like it, doesn't it?" returned Sam briefly.

"The game isn't ended yet."

"No, but it will be when you land in prison, Baxter."

"I'll get square."

"You have promised to get square times without number—and you have failed every time."

"I won't fail the next time."

"Yes, you will. Wrong never yet triumphed over right."

"Oh, don't preach, Sam Rover."

"I am not preaching, I am simply trying to show you how foolish it is to do wrong. Why don't you turn over a new leaf?"

"Oh, such talk makes me sick!" growled the bully, and turned away.

A little while later Captain Blossom appeared and hunted up Dan Baxter, who sat in his state-room, packing up his few belongings.

"Well, have you decided on your course, young man?" demanded the master of the *Golden Wave*.

"Do you mean to lock me up if I refuse to become a sailor?" asked Dan Baxter,

"I do, and I won't argue with you, either. Is it yes or no?"

"I don't want to be locked up in some dark hole on your ship."

"Then you are willing to become a sailor?"

"I—er—I suppose so."

"Very well, you can remove your things to the forecastle. Jack Lesher, the first mate, will give you your bunk."

This was "adding insult to injury," as it is termed, so far as Baxter was concerned, for it will be remembered that it was Jack Lesher who had obtained the passage on the *Golden Wave* for the bully.

But Dan Baxter was given no chance to demur. Taking his traps he went on deck, where Jack Lesher met him, grinning in sickly fashion.

"So you are going to make a change, eh?" said the mate.

"You needn't laugh at me, if I am," growled Baxter.

"I shan't laugh, my boy. It's hard luck," said Lesher. "Come along."

He led the way to the forecastle and gave Baxter a bunk next to that occupied by old Jerry. Then he brought out an old suit of sailor's clothing and tossed it over.

"You've run in hard luck, boy," he said in a low voice, after he had made certain that nobody else was within hearing. "I am sorry for you."

"Really?" queried Dan Baxter, giving the mate a sharp look.

"Yes, I am, and if I can do anything to make it easy for you, count on me," went on Jack Lesher.

"Thank you."

"I suppose taking that money and the other things was more of boy's sport than anything, eh?"

"That's the truth. I wanted to get square with those Rover boys. They are my bitter enemies. I didn't want the money."

Just then old Jerry came in and the conversation came to an end. But Baxter felt that he had a friend on board and this eased him a little. He did not know that the reason Jack Lesher liked him was because the first mate was a criminal himself and had once served a term in a Michigan jail for knocking down a passenger on a boat and robbing him of his pocketbook. As the old saying goes, "Birds of a feather flock together."

When the girls came on deck they found Baxter doing some of the work which Dick and Tom had been doing the morning before. At first they were inclined to laugh, but Dora stopped herself and her cousins.

"Don't let us laugh at him," she whispered. "It is hard enough for the poor fellow as it is."

"I am not going to notice him after this," said Nellie. "To me he shall be an entire stranger." And the others agreed to treat Dan Baxter in the same manner.

But the boys were not so considerate, and Tom laughed outright when he caught sight of Baxter swabbing up some dirt on the rear deck. This made the bully's passion arise on the instant and he caught up his bucket as if to throw it at Tom's head.

"Don't you dare, Baxter!" cried Tom. "If you do we'll have a red-hot war."

"I can lick you, Tom Rover!"

"Perhaps you can and perhaps you can't."

Baxter put up his fists, but on the approach of Dick and Sam he promptly retreated. But before he went he hissed in Tom's ear:

"You wait, and see what I do!"

"He had better keep his distance," said Dick. "If he doesn't, somebody will get hurt."

"I suppose it galls him to work," said Sam. "He always was rather lazy."

The day proved a nice one, and the Rover boys spent most of the time with the three girls, who were glad of their company once more.

All speculated on the question of what had become of the Tacoma, and of what the folks at home would think concerning their prolonged absence.

"I'd give a good deal to send a message home," said Dick.

"We must cable as soon as we reach shore," added Dora.

They saw but little of Dan Baxter during the day and nothing whatever of him the day following.

"He is trying to avoid us," said Sam. "Well, I am just as well satisfied."

Through old Jerry they learned that Baxter hated the work given to him and that he was being favored a little by the first mate.

"Tell ye what, I hate that mate," said Jerry. "He's got a wicked eye, and he drinks like a fish."

"I know he drinks," answered Tom. "I smelt the liquor in his breath."

They were now getting down into warmer latitudes and the next night proved unusually hot. It was dark with no stars shining, and the air was close, as if another storm was at hand.

"I can't sleep," said Tom, after rolling around in his berth for half an hour. "I'm going on deck." And he dressed himself and went up for some air. He walked forward and leaned over the rail, watching the waves as they slipped behind the noble ship.

Tom's coming on deck had been noticed by Dan Baxter, who sat on the side of the fore-castle, meditating on his troubles. As the bully saw the youth leaning over the rail, his face took on a look of bitter hatred.

"I'll teach him to laugh at me!" he muttered.

Gazing around he saw that nobody was within sight and then he arose to his feet. With a cat-like tread he came up behind Tom, who still looked at the waves, totally unconscious of danger.

Baxter's heart beat so loudly that he was afraid Tom would hear it. Again he looked around. Not a soul was near, and the gloom of the night was growing thicker.

"He'll laugh another way soon!" he muttered, and stepped closer.

His fist was raised to deliver a blow when Tom happened to straighten up and look around. He saw the form behind him and the upraised arm and leaped aside.

The blow missed its mark and Tom caught Baxter by the shoulder.

"What do you mean, Dan Baxter, by this attack?" he began, when the bully aimed another blow at him. This struck Tom full in the temple and partly dazed him. Then the two clenched awl fell heavily against the rail.

"I'll fix you!" panted Baxter, striking another blow as best he could, and then, as Tom struck him in return, he forced Tom's head against the rail with a thump. The blow made Tom see stars and he was more dazed than ever.

"Le—let up!" he gasped, but Baxter continued to crowd him against the rail, which at this point was very weak because of the collision with the steamer. Suddenly there was a snap and a crack and the rail gave way. Baxter leaped back in time to save himself from falling, but Tom could not help himself, and, with a wild cry, he went overboard!

CHAPTER XI

A CALL FROM THE STERN

For the instant after Tom slipped over the side of the *Golden Wave*, Dan Baxter was too dazed to do more than stare at the spot where he had last seen the boy with whom he had been struggling.

"Gone!" he muttered presently. "Gone!" he repeated and crouched back in the darkness.

The great beads of perspiration came to his brow as he heard rapid footsteps approaching. Would he be accused of sending Tom Rover to his death?

"What's the trouble?" came in the voice of Captain Blossom.

Instead of answering, Dan Baxter crept still further back. Then, watching his chance, he darted into the forecastle.

"Hullo, the rail is broken!" he heard the captain exclaim. "Bring a lantern here, quick!"

A sailor came running with a lantern, which lit up the narrow circle of the deck near the rail and part of the sea beyond.

"Somebody gave a cry," said the captain, to those who began to gather.
"Looks to me as if the rail gave way and let somebody overboard."

"Tom Rover was on deck," came from old Jerry. "Do you reckon as how it was him?"

"I don't know. It was somebody, that's certain. Call all hands at once."

This was done, and Dan Baxter had to come out with the rest. He was pale and trembled so he could scarcely stand.

"All here," said Captain Blossom. "Must have been one of the Rover boys or one of the young ladies."

Word was passed along and soon Sam and Dick came rushing on deck.

"Tom is missing!" cried Sam.

"If that is so, I'm afraid, boys, you have seen the last of your brother," said Captain Blossom. He turned to his crew. "Do any of you know anything of this affair?"

There was a dead silence. Then he questioned the man at the wheel.

"Don't know a thing, cap'n," was the answer.

"It's queer. He must have pressed on the rail very hard.. Here are half a dozen nails torn from the wood."

While this talk was going on Dick and Sam had passed along the rail from the place of the accident to the stern.

"Perhaps he caught hold somewhere," said Sam, who was unwilling to believe that his brother had really perished.

They had just gained the stern and were looking over when a call came from out of the darkness.

"He—help! Help!"

"It's Tom!" screamed Dick in delight. "Tom, is that you?"

"Yes! Help!"

"Where are you?"

"Holding on to a rope. Help me quick. I—I can't hold on mu—much longer!"

"We'll help you," answered Dick.

Captain Blossom was called and more lanterns were lit, and then a Bengal light, and Tom was seen to be holding fast to a rope which had in some manner fallen overboard and become entangled in the rudder chain.

By the aid of the boat-hook the rope was hauled up and to the side of the *Golden Wave*. At the same time the sails were lowered, and then a rope ladder was thrown down. Dick descended to the edge of the waves, and, watching his chance, caught Tom by the collar of his coat. Then the brothers came slowly to the deck.

A cheer went up when it was found that Tom was safe once more, and Nellie Laning could not resist rushing forward and catching the wet youth in her arms. Tom was so exhausted he dropped on the nearest seat, and it was several minutes before he had recovered strength enough to speak.

"I would have been drowned had it not been for that rope," he said when questioned. "As I slid along the side of the ship the rope hit me in the face. I clutched it and clung fast for dear life. Then when I came up and swept astern I called as loudly as I could, but it seemed an age before anybody heard me."

"It was a narrow escape," said Dick. "You can thank a kind Providence that your life was spared."

"You must have leaned on the rail awfully hard," put in Nellie.

"Leaned on the rail?" repeated Tom. "It wasn't my fault that I went overboard. It was Dan Baxter's."

"Dan Baxter!" came from several.

"Exactly. He tackled me in the dark, and we had it hot and heavy for a minute. Then he crowded me on the rail, and it gave way. He jumped back and let me go overboard."

"The rascal! I'll settle with him!" cried Dick. "I'll teach him to keep his distance after this!"

He knew Baxter was still forward, and ran in that direction. The bully saw him coming and tried to hide in the forecastle, but Dick was too quick for him and hauled him back on the deck.

"Take that for shoving my brother overboard, you scoundrel!" he exclaimed, and hit Baxter a staggering blow straight between the eyes.

"Stop!" roared the bully, and struck out in return. But Dick dodged the blow, and then hit Baxter in the chin and on the nose. The elder Rover boy was excited, and hit with all of his force, and the bully measured his length on the deck.

"Good fer you!" cried old Jerry, who stood looking on. "That's the way to serve him, the sarpint!"

Slowly Baxter arose to his knees, and then his feet, where he stood glaring at Dick.

"Don't you hit me again!" he muttered.

"But I will," retorted Dick, and struck out once more. This time his fist landed on the bully's left eye, and once again Baxter went down, this time with a thud.

The sailors were collecting, and soon Jack Lesher rushed up. He stepped between Dick and the bully.

"Stop it!" he ordered harshly. "We don't allow fighting on board of this craft."

"I wasn't fighting," answered Dick coolly. "I was just teaching a rascal a lesson."

"It amounts to the same thing. If you have any fault to find tell the captain, or tell me."

"Well, I'll go to the captain, not you," retorted Dick.

"All right," growled the first mate. "But just remember you can't boss things when I'm around."

When Captain Blossom understood the situation he was thoroughly angry.

"Baxter certainly ought to be in prison," he said. "I'll clap him in the brig and feed him on bread and water for three days and see how he likes that."

"He ought not to be left at large," said Dora, with a shudder. "He may try to murder somebody next."

"We'll watch him after this," said the captain.

He kept his word about putting Baxter in the ship's jail. But through Lesher the bully, got much better fare than bread and water. Strange as it may seem, a warm friendship sprang up between the bully and the first mate.

"I aint got nothing against you, Baxter," said Jack Lesher. "When we get to Australia perhaps we can work together, eh?" and he closed one eye suggestively. Baxter had told him of his rich relative, and the mate thought there might be a chance to get money from Baxter. "He'd rather give me money than have me tell his relation what sort of a duck he is," said Lesher to himself.

After this incident the time passed pleasantly enough for over a week. When Baxter came from the brig he went to work without a word. Whenever he passed the Rovers or the girls he acted as if he did not know they were there, and they ignored him just as thoroughly. But the boys watched every move the bully made.

As mentioned before, Jack Lesher was a drinking man, and as the weather grew warmer the mate increased his potions until there was scarcely a day when he was thoroughly sober. Captain Blossom remonstrated with him, but this did little good.

"I'm attending to my duties," said Lesher. "And if I do that you can't expect more from me."

"I thought I hired a man that was sober," said Captain Blossom. "I won't place my vessel in charge of a man who gets drunk."

Yet he was not willing to do the mate's work, or put that work onto others, so Jack Lesher had to take his turn on deck, no matter in what condition.

"I must say I don't like that first mate at all," said Tom to Sam. "He is very friendly with Baxter."

"I have noticed that," replied the youngest Rover. "Such a friendship doesn't count in the mate's favor."

"Last night he was thoroughly drunk, and wasn't fit to command."

"Well, that is Captain Blossom's lookout. The captain can't be on deck all of the time."

Two nights after this talk Jack Lesher was again in command of the ship, Captain Blossom having retired after an unusually hard day.

It was hot and dark, and the air betokened a storm. The man at the wheel was following a course set by the captain, and the sailors whose watch was on deck lay around taking it as easy as they could.

The mate had been drinking but little in the afternoon, but before coming on deck he took several draughts of rum. He was in a partiallarly bad humor and ready to find fault with anybody or anything.

Some of the sails had been reefed, and these he ordered shaken out, although there was a stiff breeze blowing. Then he approached the man at the wheel and asked for the course.

"Southwest by south," was the answer.

"That aint right," growled the mate. "It should be south by west."

"The captain gave it to me southwest by south," answered the man.

"Don't talk back to me!" roared Jack Lesher. "I know the course as well as the captain. Make it south by west, or I'll flog you for disobeying orders."

"Aye, aye, sir," answered the man at the wheel, and the course was changed, for the sailor stood greatly in fear of the mate. Then the mate sent below for another drink of rum.

CHAPTER XII

ANOTHER ACCIDENT AT SEA

It was four hours later, and Captain Blossom was just preparing to come on deck, when there, came a fearful shock which threw the Golden Wave back and over on her side.

"We have struck! We are on the rocks!" came a shrill cry from the deck, and immediately there was an uproar.

The Rover boys were thrown to the floor from their berths, and it was several seconds before they could realize what had happened.

"We have struck something, that is sure!" gasped Sam.

As quickly as they could they donned their clothing and made their way to the large state-room occupied by the girls.

"Oh, what a shock!" came from Nellie.

"Are you safe?" asked Tom.

"I am, but poor Grace struck her head on the wall, and is unconscious."

Without ceremony Tom picked up the unconscious girl, wrapped her in a blanket, and, aided by Sam, carried her to the deck, the others following. A minute later Grace revived.

On deck they found all in confusion. The bowsprit of the *Golden Wave* was gone, and also the main topmast, while a mass of the rigging littered the forecastle. It was also announced that the rudder was broken and the vessel was pounding helplessly on the rocks, with a big hole in the bow directly below the waterline.

"Who changed the course?" demanded Captain Blossom. "We should be fifty miles away from these rocks."

"The first mate made me change the course," said the man who had been at the wheel. "I told him you had said southwest by south, and he made it south by west."

"He don't know what he's talking about!" howled Jack Lesher. The shock had partly sobered him. "He was steering due south, and I told him to make it southwest by south."

But little more could be said on the point, for it was feared that the schooner would go down at any moment.

"We must man the boats," said the captain. "Bring up the provisions and the kegs of water, and be quick about it."

"Are we near land?" asked Dick.

"There should be some islands four or five miles south of this spot," answered Captain Blossom.

Now that there was danger of going down some of the sailors seemed to grow crazy. Half a dozen tumbled into one of the boats and began to lower it of their own accord.

"Stand back there!" shouted the captain. "The girls must go first."

"Not much!" shouted one of the sailors. "It's everybody for himself now!" And in a moment more the small boat had left the ship's side and disappeared in the darkness.

There were three other boats and the remaining sailors, along with the first mate and Dan Baxter, wanted to crowd into these. But Captain Blossom said he would shoot the first man who tried to row away without his orders. Then some provisions were put into the boats, and the captain divided the whole company among the three boats.

"Let us stay together, captain," pleaded Dick. "We can row."

"And what of the girls, Rover?"

"Let us go with the Rover boys," pleaded Dora, and Nellie and Grace said the same. Old Jerry also stood by his friends.

While this talk was going on there was a rush for two of the boats, and before Captain Blossom could do anything his men were off, taking Jack Lesher and Dan Baxter with them.

"You can go down with the ship!" cried Dan Baxter mockingly. An instant later the darkness hid the speaker from view.

"They have left us," cried Captain Blossom. "But, thank fortune, the best and largest boat is also left."

Some provisions had been tumbled into this boat, and a cask of water followed. Then the girls were placed on board, the Rover boys followed, and the captain and old Jerry came behind, to cut away. Down went the small boat into the mighty waves, and each of the boys caught up an oar.

"Pull!" roared Captain Blossom. "Pull for your lives!" And they did pull, two boys on one side, and Sam and old Jerry on the other. The girls huddled in the stern, expecting every moment to see the little craft turn bottom side up. They scraped along the side of the doomed ship, and then along some rocks. Captain Blossom was in the bow, peering ahead.

"To the left!" he yelled. "Quick!" And then came a shock, and the captain disappeared beneath the waves.

"The captain is gone!" screamed Dora, but she was hardly heard, for the ship was pounding on the rocks, and the spray was flying in all directions. The boys and old Jerry continued to pull, knowing not what else to do, and at last the spot was left behind and they found themselves on the bosom of the mighty Pacific, in the black darkness, out of sight of everything, with only the sounds of the wind and the waves filling their ears.

"Do you think we will ever get out of this alive?" asked Grace of Dora.

"Let us pray that we may all be spared," answered Dora, and they did pray, more earnestly than they had ever before prayed in their whole lives. It was a moment that put their faith to a supreme test.

The boys did not dare to stop rowing, and they kept on until their backs ached and their arms seemed ready to drop from their sockets.

"We had better take turns," said Dick, at last. "We can't keep this up all night.." And his suggestion was followed out, two, rowing at a time, for a space of fifteen or twenty minutes.

They thought they might see something of the other boats, but nothing came to view, and when they set up a shout at the top of their lungs, no answer came back.

"They have either gone down or else got out of this neighborhood," said Tom.

"It was too bad to lose Captain Blossom," said Sam. "He was not such a bad sort, after all."

It was not long after this that a mass of wreckage drifted past them. There was a bit of broken spar and some other woodwork, but no human being, and they let the wreckage go.

By looking at his watch Dick saw that it was three o'clock in the morning.

"It will be light in another couple of hours," he said. "If we can keep on top of the waves until then perhaps we can sight the islands the captain mentioned."

"I wish it was daylight now," sighed Nellie.

Fortunately a bundle of clothing had been brought along, and as the water was warm, nobody suffered much from the wetting received. Care

was taken to keep the provisions as dry as possible, for there was no telling how long it would be before they would be able to get more.

Slowly the night dragged by, and, with the coming of morning, the wind went down, the storm passing to the northward.

"It is growing lighter," announced Dora. "The sunlight is beginning to, show over the rim of the sea."

Half an hour later the sun came up, like a great ball of fire from a bath in the ocean, capping the high waves with gold. As the light spread around them, Dick stood up on a seat and gazed eagerly in all directions.

"What do you see?" demanded the others.

"Nothing," he answered, with a sinking heart; "nothing but water on all sides of us."

"The islands—they must be somewhere!" cried Tom, and he, too, took a look, followed by the others. The last to look was old Jerry.

"Can't see much," said the old sailor slowly. "But I kind of reckon there's a dark spot directly southward."

"It must be one of the islands the captain mentioned!" exclaimed Dora.

"We might as well row in that direction," said Dick. "There is nothing else to do."

"It's queer what became of the other boats," said Sam.

Some of the provisions were brought forth and they ate sparingly, and drank a little of the water. Then the boys and old Jerry took up the oars once more and began to pull as nearly southward as they could make it, steering by the sun.

When the sun grew higher it became very warm, so that the rowers were glad enough to lay aside their jackets. By noon they reckoned that

they had covered six or eight miles. One after another stood up on the seats to take a look around.

"Nothing in sight yet," said Dick, with a sorry shake of his head. "We must have been mistaken in that dark spot."

"What will you do now?" asked Grace. "The hot sun is beginning to make my head ache."

Sam's head also ached, but he said nothing. Nobody knew what to suggest.

"One thing is certain; we can't remain out on the bosom of the ocean," said Dick.

"Better continue to pull southward," came from old Jerry. "There are lots of islands down that way. The map is full of 'em."

"Yes, the map is full of them," answered Dick. "But a quarter of an inch on the map means a hundred miles or two in reality."

Yet it was decided to row on, trusting to luck to strike some island, either large or small. It was now fiercely hot, and all hands perspired freely.

By the end of the afternoon the boys were worn out, and had to give up rowing. The girls were dozing in the stern, having covered their heads with a thin shawl, stretched from one gunwale to another. Tom and Sam were dizzy from the glare of the sun on the water.

"Another day like this will set me crazy," said the youngest Rover. "I'd give ten dollars for a pair of blue goggles."

Old Jerry had been looking intently to the westward. Now he pointed in that direction.

"See that trail of smoke," he said. "Unless I am mistaken a steamship is sailing toward us!"

"A steamship!" cried Tom, and the words awoke the girls. "We must hail the vessel by all means."

"If she comes close enough," said Captain Jerry pointedly. "Don't be too hopeful, my lads. She may pass us by."

CHAPTER XIII

THE CRUSOES OF SEVEN ISLANDS

All on board of the rowboat watched the thin trail of smoke with interest.

"I believe it is going away from us," said Dora.

"No, it is coming closer," said Nellie.

"It is certainly moving to the northward," put in Sam.

A quarter of an hour went by and the smoke came only a little nearer.

"She is a big steamer," said Captain Jerry. "But she aint comin' jest this way."

"You are sure?" cried Tom.

"Yes, lad. It's too bad, but it can't be helped."

The old sailor was right; half an hour later the smoke had shifted, and after that it faded gradually from sight.

It was a heavy blow, after their expectations had been raised so high, and tears stood in the eyes of all of the girls, while the boys looked unusually sober.

What was to do next? All asked that question, yet it was only Captain Jerry who answered it.

"Let us pull southward," said he.

And they did so, although with hearts that were as heavy as lead in their bosoms.

Slowly the night came on. Shortly after the sun set the moon showed itself and the sky became studded with stars, the Southern Cross standing out boldly among them. The pale light made the bosom of the ocean glisten like silver.

"A beautiful night," said Dora. "But who can enjoy it when we do not know what to-morrow will bring forth," and she sighed deeply.

The boys and old Jerry continued to take turns at rowing, while the girls sank into fitful slumber.

Presently the old sailor raised his head.

"Listen!" he said, and they did so, and far away heard a strange booming.

"What's that?" questioned Sam.

"It's breakers!" cried Tom. "We must be near some coast!"

"The lad is right," came from Captain Jerry. "We are near an island, after all!"

Dick stood on a seat, and, as the boat rode to the top of a wave, took a look around.

"An island!" he cried. "Dead ahead!"

"Hurrah! We are saved!" ejaculated Sam. "What is the matter?" questioned
Dora, rousing up, followed by the other girls.

"There is an island ahead."

"We must be careful how we approach the shore, lads," cautioned Jerry. "If we strike the rocks, it may cost us our lives. Perhaps we had better hold off until daylight."

"I see a stretch of sand!" came from Tom, who was standing up. "If we can reach that, we'll be all right."

Old Jerry took a careful look. The sand was there, true enough, but there were dangerous breakers between the boat and that shore.

"If you say so, we can run our chances," he said. "The young ladies must hold tight, and not mind a good ducking."

The force of the waves was now carrying them closer and closer to the breakers. Under old Jerry's directions the boys took a short, sharp stroke, keeping the rowboat straight up to the waves. The noise was like thunder, and soon the spray was flying all over them.

"Now pull!" cried Captain Jerry. "One, two, three! Hold tight, girls!" And away they went into the breakers. One wave dashed over the craft, but it was not swamped, and before another could hit them they darted up a swell and onto a long, sandy beach.

In a twinkle the old sailor was out, along with Dick, and, aided by another wave, they ran the boat well up the beach, out of the harm of the waves. It was a hard struggle, and when it was over Dick sank down almost exhausted.

"Saved!" murmured Dora, as she leaped out on shore. "Thank Heaven!"
And all of the others echoed the sentiment.

The empty boat was pulled up out of harm's way and chained fast to a palm tree growing near, and then the party of seven sat down to rest and to talk over the new condition of affairs. They were on a wild, tropical coast, with a long, sandy beach running to the ocean, and back of this a dense mass of tropical vegetation, including palms, plantains, cocoanuts, and date trees. Back of the heavy growth was a distant hill, standing out dimly in the moonlight.

"This looks like a regular Crusoe-like island," said Dora, as she gazed around. "There is not a sign of a habitation anywhere."

"A good many of the South Sea islands are not inhabited," said Dick. "The natives won't live on them because they are subject to volcano eruptions, earthquakes, and tidal waves."

"Well, I hope we don't have any of those things while we stay here," came from Nellie. "An earthquake would scare me almost to death."

"I do not see that we can do better than to stay right here for the rest of the night," said Tom. "I am too tired out to walk very, far."

It was decided to follow Tom's advice, and all made themselves as comfortable as circumstances permitted. They had some matches in a waterproof safe, and soon a camp-fire was started, at which they dried some of their garments. Then, after eating some of the provisions that were left, they laid down to rest. Strange as it may seem all slept soundly until sunrise, and nothing came to disturb them.

When the girls arose they found the boys and Captain Jerry already preparing breakfast. On the shore Tom, had found some oysters and shell-fish, and these were baking. Among the provisions were a little tea and coffee, and old Jerry had made a pot of coffee, which did one good to smell. Sam had brought down some cocoanuts from a nearby tree, and also found some ripe bananas.

"We won't starve' to death here, that's certain," said Dick, when they all sat down to eat. "The island is full of good things. If I had a gun I could bring down lots of birds, and monkeys, too."

"I don't think I'd care to eat a monkey," said Grace. "But I wouldn't mind eating birds."

"There must be plenty of fish here, too," said Tom. "In fact I saw some sporting in the waters of a little bay up the coast."

"Shall we go up and down the coast after breakfast?" asked Sam.

"My advice is to climb yonder hill and take a squint around," came from Captain Jerry.

"That's a splendid idea, providing we can get to the tap," said Dick.

"There is no use of all of us going, lad. You can go with me while the rest stay here."

"What shall we do in the meantime?" asked Sam.

"Better try your hand at fishin', lad, and see if you can knock some birds over with sticks and stones. If ye get anything, let the girls cook us somethin', for we'll be powerful hungry by the time we get back."

Half an hour later Captain Jerry and Dick set out. Each carried a few ship's biscuits and also a heavy stick which had been cut in the thickets. Each wished he had a gun or a pistol, but those articles were not to be had.

The climb up the hill was by no means an easy one. The rocks were rough and in many spots the jungle of brush and vines was so thick that to get through was next to impossible. It was very warm, and they had to stop often to cool off and catch their breath.

"I don't wonder that people in hot countries move slowly," said Dick. "I feel more like resting than doing anything else."

It was almost noon when they came in sight of the top of the hill. There were still some rough rocks to climb, and these they had to ascend by means of some vines that grew handy.

"What a magnificent view!" cried Dick.

It certainly was magnificent. Looking back in the direction they had come they could see the Pacific Ocean, glittering in the bright sun-light and stretching miles and miles out of sight.

The island they were on looked to be about half a mile in diameter. Northward, eastward, and westward was the ocean, but to the southward was a circlet of six islands, having a stretch of calm water between them. Between some of the islands the water was very shallow, while elsewhere it looked deep.

"Seven islands in all," said old Jerry. "And not a sign of a house or hut anywhere."

"We are the Crusoes of Seven Islands," said Dick. "But do you really believe they are uninhabited?"

"Do ye see any signs of life, lad?"

"I must say I do not. It's queer, too, for I rather imagined one at least of the other boats had reached this place."

"I thought the same. But it looks now as if they all went to Davy Jones's locker, eh?"

"It certainly does look that way."

From the top of the hill they took a careful survey of the situation. The elevation was in the very center of the island. Down toward the other islands the slope was more abrupt than it was in the direction from which they had come.

"We can take a look at those other islands later on," said old Jerry. "Reckon as how we have done enough for one day. If we don't git back soon, they'll become anxious about us."

"I wish we had a flag," said Dick. "Here is a tall tree. We could chop away the top branches and hang up a signal of distress. If we did that, perhaps some ship would come this way and rescue us."

"Right ye are, lad, but it aint many ships come this way. They are afraid o' the rocks we run on."

Having looked around once more, to "git the lay o' the land," as Captain Jerry expressed it, they started to descend the hill. This proved as difficult as climbing up had been.

Dick went in advance, and was half-way down when he stepped on a loose stick and went rolling into a perfect network of vines and brushwood.

"Are ye hurt?" sang out old Jerry.

"No—not much!" answered the eldest Rover. "But my wind—Oh, goodness gracious!"

Dick broke off short, and small wonder. As 'he arose from the hole into which he had tumbled, a hissing sound caught his ears. Then up came the head of a snake at least eight feet long, and in a twinkle the reptile had wound itself around the boy's lower limbs!

CHAPTER XIV

SETTLING DOWN ON THE ISLAND

"What's wrong, lad?"

"A snake! It has wound itself around my legs!"

"Ye don't say!" gasped Captain Jerry, and then leaped down to the hollow. "Well, by gosh! Take that, ye beast!"

"That" was a blow aimed at the reptile's head with the sailor's stick. Old Jerry's aim was both swift and true and the head of the reptile received a blow which knocked out one eye and bruised its fang. But the body wound itself around Dick tighter than ever.

Fortunately the youth had not lost his wits completely, and as the neck of the reptile came up, he grasped it in his hand with the strongest grip he could command.

"Cut it—cut its head off!" he panted. "Get your pocket-knife!"

At once Captain Jerry dropped his stick and pulled out his jack-knife, a big affair, such as many old sailors carry. One pull opened the main blade, and then old Jerry started in to do as Dick had suggested. It was no easy job and the body of the snake squirmed and whipped in every direction, lashing each on the neck and the cheek. But the head came off at last and then they left the body where it fell, and leaped out of the way of further danger.

"A close shave, lad," said the old sailor, as he peered around for more snakes.

"I—I should sa—say it wa—was," panted Dick. He was deadly pale. "I—I thought it would strangle me sure!"

"If it had got around your neck, that is what would have happened. Reckon as how we had better git out o' this neighborhood, eh?"

"Yes, yes, let us go at once," and Dick started off once more.

After that both were very careful where they stepped and kept their eyes wide open for any new danger which might arise. So they went on until they came in sight of the seashore.

"We had better say nothing about the snake," said the eldest Rover. "It will only scare the girls to death."

"No, lad, you are wrong. We must warn them of danger. Otherwise they may run into it headlong."

All of the others were glad to have them back and plied them with questions.

"So there are seven islands," said Tom. "Well, as there are seven of us, that is one island apiece. I don't think we need complain," and his jolly manner made all laugh.

When Jerry told the story about the snake Dora set up a scream.

"Oh, Dick, if it had really strangled you!" she gasped. "You must be very, very careful in the future!"

"Yes, and you must be careful, too, Dora," he answered.

"There is a nice beach right around the edge of the island," said old Jerry. "So, when we want to visit the other islands, we can walk around on the sand. That is better than climbing the hill."

"But the beach doesn't run to the other islands, does it?" asked Sam.

"No, but we can carry our rowboat around with us, to that bay between the islands. There the water is smooth enough for anybody to row in."

"The six islands are shaped exactly like a ring," said Dick. "And this island is the big stone on top."

"As the island is uninhabited I suppose we'll have to settle down and build ourselves huts or something," came from Nellie.

"To be sure. We'll be regular Robinson Crusoes," answered Tom. "Why,
I can tell you it will be jolly, when we get used to it."

"Where will we build our huts?" asked Sam.

"We can build them here, if we wish," replied Dick. "But I rather favor the side fronting the other islands."

"Yes, that's the best side," said Captain Jerry. "If we build here, a strong storm may knock our huts flat. That side is more sheltered and, consequently, safer. Besides, there is more fruit there, and I'm sure better fishing in the bay, and that's what counts, too."

"Of course it counts—since we must live on fruits, fish, and what birds and animals we manage to knock over," said Tom.

The boys had been fairly successful in hunting and fishing, having knocked over half a dozen birds and caught four fair-sized fish. Everything had been done to a turn over the camp-fire, and Dick and old Jerry did full justice to what was set before them—on some dried palm leaves Nellie had found. Their coffee they drank out of some cocoanut shells. They had no forks, but used sharp sticks instead, and the knives the boys carried in their pockets.

The weather continued fine and that night the moon shone as brightly as ever. The boys took a stroll on the beach to talk over their plans.

"I am sorry to say there is no telling how long we may have to stay here," said Dick. "It may be a day, a week, or for years."

"Oh, some ship is bound to pick us up some day," returned Tom. "And if we can find enough to live on in the meantime, what is the use of complaining? I am glad my life was spared."

"So am I, Tom."

"I would like to know what became of Dan Baxter," put in Sam. "Can it be possible that all of the rest perished?"

"Certainly it is possible, Sam. You know what a time we had of it."

"It is an awful death to die—in the midst of the ocean," and the youngest Rover shuddered.

"I agree with you," said Tom. "But I am more sorry for Captain Blossom than for Baxter."

"The wrecking of the ship was the fault of the mate. He was drunk," said Dick. "The man at the wheel was doing what was right until Jack Lesher came along."

"Well, I guess the mate went down with the rest."

"Look!" cried Sam, pointing to sea. "I see something dark on the water."

All gazed in the direction he pointed out and made out a mass of wreckage. They watched it steadily until the breakers cast it almost at their feet.

"Some wreckage from the ship!" cried Dick, on examination. "See, here is the name on some of the woodwork. I reckon the vessel went to pieces on the rocks."

The wreckage consisted mainly of broken spars and cordage. But there were also some boxes, which, on being opened, proved to contain provisions.

"It's not such a bad find, after all," said Tom. "I hope some more comes ashore." But though they waited the best part of the night, nothing more came to view.

In the morning the boys felt tired and they did not rouse up until nearly noon. They found old Jerry at the beach, inspecting the wreckage.

"The ropes may come in handy," he said. "But the wood is of small account, since' we have all we want already to hand."

It was decided to remain at the beach for the next day, to look for more wreckage. But none came in, and then they started in a body to skirt the shore around to the South Bay, as old Jerry called it. At first they thought to carry the boat around, but concluded to come back for that later.

It was a journey full of interest, for the sandy beach was dotted with many strange and beautiful seashells, and just back of the sand was the rich tropical growth already mentioned. The woods were full of monkeys and birds, and once Tom thought he caught sight of some goats or deer.

They reached an ideal spot fronting the little bay a little before noon, and then the girls were glad enough to sit down in the shade and rest. The bay was full of fish, and before long they had caught three of the finny tribe. Fruit was also to be had in plenty, and a spring of fresh water gushed from the rocks of the hill behind them.

"This is certainly a beautiful place," murmured Dora, as she gazed around. "Were it not for the folks at home worrying about us, I could spend quite some time here and enjoy it."

"Well, as our situation cannot be helped, let us make the best of it," said Dick cheerfully. "There is no use in being downhearted when we ought to be glad that we were saved."

Close to the rocks they found several trees growing in something of two circles, and they decided that these trees should form the corner posts of a double house or cabin.

"If we had an ax we might cut down some wood, but as it is we will have to use strong vines and cover the huts with palm leaves," said Captain Jerry.

The boys were soon at work, cutting the vines and gathering the palm leaves, and the girls assisted as well as they were able in fastening up the vine-ropes and binding in the leaves. It was slow work, yet by nightfall one half the house was complete and the other had the roof covered.

"Now, if rain comes, we can keep fairly dry," said Tom.

It rained the very next day and they were glad enough to crowd into the completed part, while the rain came down in torrents. When the worst of the downpour was over the wind arose and it kept blowing fiercely all of the afternoon and the night.

"We can be thankful we are sheltered by the hill," said Sam. "Were we on the other side of the island, the wind would knock the hut flat and drench us in no time."

The storm kept all awake until early morning and when it went down they were glad to sink to rest. All slept soundly and it was not until ten o'clock, when the sun was struggling through the clouds, that Tom arose, to find the others still slumbering.

"I'll let them sleep," he said to himself "They need it and there is no need for them get to up."

Stretching himself, he walked quietly from the hut and down to the beach. His first thought was to try to collect some wood, more or less dry, and start a fire.

Gazing across the bay to one of the other islands, he saw a sight which filled him with astonishment. There, on the beach of the island, lay the wreck of the *Golden Wave*.

CHAPTER XV

ANOTHER CASTAWAY BROUGHT TO LIGHT

"The *Golden Wave*! Hurrah!"

Tom could not resist setting up a shout when he saw the familiar hull of the schooner, resting quietly on the beach of an island on the other side of the bay.

The cry awoke Sam, Dick, and old Jerry, and they came running out to learn what it meant.

"The schooner!" came from Sam. "How did that get there?"

"The storm must have driven her off the rocks and into this bay," answered Dick. "She didn't go down, after all."

"It's a fine thing for us," put in Captain Jerry, his broad face beaming with pleasure. "Now we can have all the provisions we want, and clothing and guns, and if we can anchor the wreck in some way, we can live on her just as comfortably as in a house at home."

The excited talking brought the girls out one after another, and they were equally pleased over the stroke of good fortune.

"She seems to be cast up pretty high on the sand," said old Jerry. "But even so, the sooner we get to her the better, or the sea may carry her off."

"I am ready to go now," said Tom. "But how are we to get to that island? It's a pity we didn't bring our boat around."

"There are two islands of the circle in between," came from Sam. "Why can't we swim from one to the next and get around that way?"

"We can try it, lad. But we want to be careful. There may be sharks around in these parts."

"Oh, don't let the sharks eat you up!" cried Grace.

"We'll keep our eyes open, never fear," said Dick.

A vote was taken, and it was decided that Sam should remain with the girls, to protect them in case of unexpected danger, while Tom, Dick, and old Jerry should make their way as best they could to the wreck.

The old sailor and the two boys were soon off. They tramped down the beach a short distance and then reached a coral reef leading to the next island. Here the water was not over a foot and a half deep, and as clear as crystal, so the passage to Island No. 2, as Tom named it, was comparatively easy.

The second island crossed they followed the shore around until they came opposite to the island upon which the wreck rested. Here there was a channel sixty or eighty feet wide and of unknown depth, the channel through which the wreck had most likely entered the bay. The water here was by no means smooth and Captain Jerry shook his head doubtfully.

"It won't be no easy swim," he said. "Reckon as how I'll try it first."

"I can get over easily enough," said Dick, and threw off part of his clothing and his shoes. He was soon in the water and striking out boldly, and the others followed.

Short as was the distance, the swim was as hard as any of them looked for, and when they reached the other side of the channel all were out of breath and had to rest for a moment.

"It's a good thing no shark happened to be near," said Tom. "The monster would certainly have had us at his mercy."

When they reached the wreck they found the stern well out of the water. The *Golden Wave* lay partly on her left side and it was a comparatively easy matter to, gain the deck.

The masts were gone and there was a big hole in the bow, but otherwise the craft had suffered little damage. Why she had not sunk was a mystery until, later on, old Jerry discovered that some of the cargo, consisting of flat cases, had got wedged into the break, thus cutting off a large portion of the leak.

"We can anchor her without trouble," said the old sailor. "And perhaps straighten her up too, so the deck won't be so slanty. Then she'll be a reg'lar hotel for all hands."

"Let us go below and see how things are down there," said Dick, and he at once led the way.

At that instant a loud sneeze reached their ears, causing Dick to pause on the companion way. Looking into the cabin he saw a man standing there, partly dressed.

"Captain Blossom!" he ejaculated. "Is it really you or your ghost?"

"Dick Rover!" cried the master of the schooner. "Then you weren't drowned, after all?"

"No, captain. But—but how did you escape?"

"Is it really Captain Blossom?" came from Tom, and he rushed down into the cabin, followed by old Jerry. All shook hands, and the face of the captain showed his pleasure over the meeting.

"So you all escaped and are here," he said. "I am downright glad to know it. What of the others?"

"We don't know what became of the other boats," answered Dick.

"Saw nothing at all?"

"Not a thing."

The captain shook his head sorrowfully.

"But how did you escape?" asked Dick again.

"That is a short story, lad. When I went overboard from the rowboat, I caught hold of some of the wreckage from the schooner. This was still fast to the deck, and by hauling myself in I soon got on board again. As I had no boat, I remained on board, for I soon saw that the schooner would not go down immediately. At daylight the ship left the rocks and drifted around on the ocean until the wind came up last night, when we struck this island and got beached, as you see. I was worn out with watching, and as soon as I found the boat was safe from sinking I went to bed, and slept soundly until I heard you three tramping around the deck."

"We are stopping over on yonder island," said Tom, when all went on deck, and he pointed in the direction. "See, Sam and the girls are waving to us. Let us wave in return, and stand apart, so they can see that there are four of us."

They did as the youngest Rover advised and soon saw that they were seen. Then Captain Blossom held up his spyglass.

"I reckon they will know who I am by that," he said, and he was right, for Sam told the girls that the fourth man was Captain Blossom beyond a doubt.

"How is your stock of provisions?" asked old Jerry. "We are getting just a bit tired of living on birds and fish. And we want a gun or a pistol with which to protect ourselves."

"The *Golden Wave* has enough provisions to last this party a year," answered the captain. "We haven't anything very fine, but we have plenty of flour, dried beans, salt and smoked meats, and a good many cases of canned vegetables, as well as sugar, tea, coffee, salt, and pepper. With fresh fish and some game we'll be able to live as well here as if we were on shore,—that is, if we can find fresh water."

"We have all the fresh water we want,—on the large island," said Tom. "And lots of tropical fruit—cocoanuts, bananas, and the like."

"If we are going to live on the ship, we'll have to bring fresh water over from the other island in a cask," said Dick. "That will not be very handy."

"Can't we move the wreck over?" came from Tom.

"No, lad," answered Captain Blossom. "She is here to stay until her timbers rot. But if we wish, we can move some of the provisions ashore. There are the parts of a rowboat below, and I reckon I am carpenter enough to put the parts together in a day or two."

"We have a boat on the north beach," said old Jerry; "we can bring it around."

"To do that, we'll have to swim the channel again," came from Dick. "And I must say I don't like that."

"Let us make a raft," cried Tom. "There must be plenty of material on board of the schooner for that."

"There certainly is," answered Captain Blossom. "Come, we can make a raft in less than an hour."

All set to work, and in a short space of time they had the material together. Ropes and spikes were there a-plenty, and as Captain Blossom laid out one stick and another, the boys and old Jerry either nailed or tied them together. A board flooring was placed on top of the spars and then the whole affair was dumped into the bay with a loud splash. It floated very well, with the flooring a good ten inches above the surface of the water, and as the raft was nearly twenty feet long by ten wide, it was capable of carrying considerable weight.

"That's better than a boat," said Dick. "We can pile a good deal more stuff on it."

"Let us get on and paddle to where we left the others," said Tom. "They will be anxious to learn the news."

Captain Blossom was willing, and they took with them a variety of provisions and also some extra clothing and some firearms. Then the raft was moved to where the boys had left part of their own clothing when they had started to swim the channel.

The coming of the big raft and its passengers to the shore where the cabin was located was greeted with shouts of joy from Sam and the three girls.

"Hurrah for the captain of the *Golden Wave*!" cried Sam, swinging his cap in the air. "We are very glad to see you safe and sound."

"And I am glad to see you," answered Captain Blossom, as he leaped ashore and grasped one and another by the hand. "Last night I was thinking I would be a lonely castaway; now I find I shall have plenty of company."

"We have brought along some provisions," put in Tom. "And in honor of this reunion, and also in honor of the fact that the Golden 'Wave has not been sunk, I move we invite the girls to get us up a regular feast. I think all bands deserve it."

"Second the motion!" cried Sam.

"All right, we'll cook you anything you want," said Nellie. "That is, if you will supply the things."

"I will," answered Tom. Then he scratched his head. "Well, by gracious!"

"What's the trouble, Tom?" asked Grace. "Did you forget to bring along some sugar?"

"Worse than that. I brought along all sorts of good things to eat, and not a single knife, fork, spoon, or dish outside of some cooking utensils."

"Oh, dear!" burst out Dora. "It will be a sorry feast if we haven't anything to eat from!"

"I'll go back for the dishes," replied Tom promptly. "Sam, do you want to visit the wreck? We can go and come by the time the things are cooked."

"To be sure I'll go," said Sam; and in a few minutes more the two boys were off on the clumsy raft.

CHAPTER XVI

SAM AND THE SHARK

"The *Golden Wave* looks like an old friend," said Sam as they paddled across the smooth waters of the bay.

"Her coming here is the finest thing that could have happened," answered his brother. "I didn't want to say anything before, but if she hadn't come what would we have done for clothing and for eating? We couldn't live on fish all the time, and one can do mighty little hunting without a gun."

"We would have had to set traps, Tom, and dig pitfalls for larger game. But I admit it would have been hard work, and I fancy a suit of goatskins, like Robinson Crusoe wore, wouldn't be half as comfortable as a suit of clothes such as I am wearing."

"If we could only float the schooner and sail away to some nearby port."

"There is no port' within three hundred miles of us, so the captain says."

Soon the boys were halfway across the bay. But moving the big raft was a laborious task, and they were glad enough to sit down and rest for a few minutes.

"There is no use of our hurrying," said Tom. "Our time is our own in this out-of-the-way place, and as we have next to nothing to do we want to make what little work there is last us."

"Like a lazy man working by the day," laughed Sam. "I'm afraid I can't work that way. When I have something to do I'm not content until it is done."

"Are you hot, Sam? Here is something to cool you off."

As Tom spoke he playfully scooped up a handful of water and threw it at his brother.

Soon the two boys were having lots of sport, throwing handfuls of the salty water at each other. Then Sam made a motion as if he was going to push Tom overboard with his paddle.

"Hi! none of that!" cried Tom. "I don't mind a wetting by retail, but I don't want it by wholesale."

He continued to throw water at Sam and the youngest Rover tried to dodge. The raft began to rock, and of a sudden Sam lost his balance and went into the bay with a splash.

Tom set up a laugh, for it was a comical sight, and it had been Sam's own fault that he went overboard. But then Tom's laughter came to an end as he saw the form of a shark moving swiftly toward the spot.

"A shark! a shark!" he screamed. "Sam, get on board, quick! A shark is after you!"

Sam had gone far down beneath the surface and he did not reappear at once. Then he came up spluttering.

"Gosh! I didn't want a bath! Tom, you—"

"Hurry and get aboard, Sam! A shark is after you!"

Sam was about ten feet from the raft, and running to the spot nearest to him, Tom held out the end of his paddle.

"A shark?" gasped the youngest Rover.

"Yes! yes! Catch the end of the paddle!"

Sam made a frantic effort to do so. In the meantime the shark came closer and Tom could see his enormous mouth and sharp teeth clearly. His blood turned to ice in his veins.

Sam made a clutch at the paddle, missed it, and disappeared once more from sight. The shark rushed to the spot and turned in dismay, and driven to desperation, Tom hit the monster over the head with the paddle. Then the shark disappeared also.

The next few seconds were full of agony for poor Tom. He gazed in all directions for Sam, and for the shark, but neither one nor the other was to be seen.

"He must have caught Sam under the water!" he muttered. "Oh, Sam, what an awful death to die!"

A slight noise at the upper end of the raft disturbed him. He turned swiftly, to see a wet hand glide over the woodwork. He made a leap and clutched the hand, and then Sam's head appeared. He gave a frantic yank, and both lay on the flooring of the raft. Sam was saved.

"The shark!" gasped Tom, when he could speak. "Did it—it—bite you?"

"No, but it grazed my shoulder," answered Sam. "If I had not dived down, I would have lost an arm at the very least."

When they felt able they looked around, but the shark had disappeared.

"That settles it," said Tom. "We must be careful and keep out of this water in the future. If we want to bathe, we will have to build a pool."

During the remainder of the trip to the wreck both were careful not to run the slightest chance of falling overboard.

"Not such a very lovely place to live in, after all," said Tom.
"Snakes on land and sharks in the water, ugh!" And Sam agreed with him.

Once on the wreck it was an easy thing to obtain the dishes and the knives, forks and spoons, and also some other things they thought they might require. They also brought away another gun, loading it up before leaving the ship.

"Now, if Mr. Shark comes around again, we can give him a dose of buckshot," said' Tom.

But the shark did not appear, excepting at a great distance.

When Sam. told his story all congratulated him on his narrow escape.

"Tom is right," said old Jerry. "Ye mustn't do no bathin' in the bay. We can fix two pools, one for the ladies and one for ourselves, and make another pool for fish, and another for turtles, if we can find any."

The girls had cooked a splendid meal, and soon the table was set on a big flat rock lying near the beach. All sat down and Captain Blossom asked a blessing, and then they all fell to with vigor, for all were hungry.

"The salt air gives one an appetite," said Dick.

The meal lasted the best part of an hour, for, as Tom said, there was no use of hurrying. As they ate, and for some time afterward, they discussed their situation and tried to arrange plans for the future.

It was decided that first of all Dick and old Jerry should climb to the top of the hill, taking with them an ax and a flag and some halyards, and fasten the flag to the top of the tree, stars down, as a signal of distress. Then the whole party was to assist in bringing from the wreck as much building material as was necessary to construct a comfortable dwelling of three large rooms, one for the girls, one for the boys and men, and one as a general living room. A store-house was also to be built, in which could be stored such provisions as were brought away from the wreck from time to time. Then they could live on shore or on the ship, as they pleased.

The following day was Sunday and all rested. The girls thought there should be some sort of religious exercises and all went to the wreck, where Captain Blossom read some chapters from the Bible and the others sang hymns.

The week to follow was a busy one and the time slipped by rapidly. A visit was paid to the hilltop and the flag raised, and Tom and old Jerry also went to the north shore and brought around the rowboat beached there. In the meantime Captain Blossom put together the rowboat parts stored on the *Golden Wave*, so they now had two boats and the raft for service across the bay and to other points on the water.

Building the house was by no means an easy task, but the Rover boys thought it more fun than work, especially with the girls to look on, and by the end of the second week the building looked quite presentable. When the two bedrooms were finished, some berths were brought over from the wreck, along with bed-clothing, and also some furniture for the living apartment. Outside the latter room a large porch was built, where they might eat and rest when the weather was fine. Not to run the risk of burning down the building in a high wind, it was decided that the cooking should be done in a shed some distance away, in the shelter of the rocks and handy to the spring.

"Who is going to be the cook?" asked Dick. "It won't be fair to put it off on one person."

"We have decided to take turns," said Dora. "Each one will be the main cook for a day at a time, with the others to help, and to wash the dishes. We are going to do all the housework, too, so you men folks can hunt and fish, and make garden if you will, to your hearts' content."

"What a lazy time we will have of it," laughed Dick.

"Captain Blossom says that as soon as we are settled we can explore all of the seven islands. Who knows we may find out something of importance," came from Tom, who stood near.

"Cannibals, for instance," put in Sam.

"Oh, do you really think there are any cannibals here?" asked Grace.

"I believe he is fooling," said Nellie. "He only wants to scare us!" And she tossed her pretty head.

"Perhaps we'll stir up some lions or tigers," said Tom.

"Or an elephant," added Dick. "But I don't think we will. My opinion is that these islands have nothing on them but birds, monkeys, small game, and snakes."

"You've forgotten one thing," said Dora, with an odd smile.

"What, Dora?"

"Castaways."

CHAPTER XVII

EXPLORING THE SEVEN ISLANDS

Another rainy spell, lasting three days, followed, but after that the sky cleared in a fashion which Captain Blossom thought betokened good weather for some time to come.

"We can now explore the seven islands and learn just what they contain," he said.

The question now arose as to who should go along and who should stay at home with the girls. Lots were cast, and by this it was decided that the exploring party should consist of Captain Blossom, Sam, and Tom, leaving Dick and old Jerry with Dora, Nellie, and Grace.

It was decided that the exploring party should take the lightest of the rowboats and enough provisions to last for a week. Each was also provided with a pistol, and Captain Blossom carried a rifle in addition.

"If all goes well we will be back inside of four days," said the captain, when he and Tom and Sam were ready to depart. "But if we are not back at that time do not worry until at least a week has gone by." And so it was arranged. It was also arranged that three shots fired in succession should be a signal that one party or the other was in trouble.

Tom and Sam were pleased over the prospect of going with the captain and they willingly took up the oars to row to the nearest island, which, as we already know, was close at hand. The boat was left on the beach and without delay the captain and the two boys plunged into the interior.

The island was small, with but a slight rise of ground in the center. It was of small importance and they soon came out on the ocean side, where there was a beach strewn with shells and with oysters scarcely fit to eat. The growth on this island was mostly of young palms and the captain was of the opinion that the ground was not many years old.

"This has been thrown up by an earthquake or a volcano," he said. "There is nothing here to interest us," and he turned back.

They already knew something of the island on which the wreck was located, but, nevertheless, made a trip across it and up the outward coast. Here they found a number of orange and lemon trees, and also a great quantity of tropical nuts and some spices. The lemons proved to be very refreshing, and Tom said he meant to come back some day and get a bagful for general use.

The next island was visited the next day, the party spending the night on the wreck. The passage to this island was rather a rough one, and they had all they could do to keep from having their provisions spilt overboard.

"It is a blessing that the sea is comparatively calm," said Captain Blossom. "Otherwise we could never make such a trip in a small boat."

This island was the largest of the group outside of the one on which the castaways had settled. It was almost square in shape and had a double hill with a tiny valley running between. In this valley the tropical growth was very dense, and the monkeys and birds were thicker than they had before seen them. There were also large quantities of blue and green parrots, filling the air with their cawing and screaming.

"This is a very nice island," said Tom, while they were resting under some calabash trees. "The wood is very valuable—indigo, rosewood, mahogany, and lots of others. And what a sweet smell!" And he drew in a long breath of satisfaction.

"It is certainly a lazy man's paradise," re-turned Sam. "A fellow need do next to nothing to feed and clothe himself here, and a house isn't absolutely necessary excepting when it storms real hard."

On this island they found numerous land crabs, some as large as their two hands, and many fierce-looking spiders, with long, hairy legs and bulging eyes. Ants were also numerous, and in one spot they located fifteen anthills, each as large as a big beehive. Insects of all sorts were numerous, and they had to continually slap at a specimen of red fly that annoyed them greatly.

"How those ants would like to get at our provisions," said Tom. "We can be thankful that we didn't locate here. Once they got at the stuff, they would eat us out of house and home."

After resting, and partaking of some of the food brought along, they continued their journey across the island.

The way was up one of the hills, and Tom was slightly in advance, when a noise ahead attracted his attention.

"Something is there," he called out, as he came to a halt.

"What is it?" asked Sam.

"I don't know. Perhaps some wild animal, or else a snake."

"Go slow there," cautioned Captain Blossom, coming up. "We don't want to run into unnecessary danger."

"What did it sound like, Tom?"

"I can't describe it. Something like a snarl, I guess."

"Perhaps it was only a monkey."

All stopped to listen, but no, sound reached their ears but the hum of insects and the chirping of some distant birds.

"I reckon I had best go first," said Captain Blossom, but he did not seem to relish the task.

Gun in hand, the captain advanced very cautiously. The boys came close behind him, each with his pistol ready for use.

Of a sudden there was a snarl with a strange "yow-yawing," and a great beast leaped up on all-fours directly in their path and darted through the bushes. The captain raised his gun and the boys their pistols, but before they could fire the beast had disappeared.

"What was it?" asked Sam, trembling with excitement.

"I give it up, unless it was a bear," said Tom.

"I think I know what it was," said the captain. "A big baboon or a gorilla."

"I guess you are right, captain," answered Tom. "I saw a gorilla in a menagerie, and it was exactly like that beast. But what a big fellow he was!"

"Gorillas are highly dangerous, especially when cornered," said Captain Blossom. He himself was more frightened than he cared to admit. "They have been known to carry a man off in their arms and bite him to death."

"Thanks, but I want no gorillas around me," declared Sam.

They waited several minutes before advancing again. But the gorilla had disappeared, nor did it show itself again during that trip on the island.

Half an hour brought them in sight of the seashore once more. They were gazing at the sea when Tom happened to glance back, and on the hill behind them saw four goats standing in a bunch, looking at them in astonishment.

"Quick! out of sight!" he cried, and dragged the others behind some trees.

"What did you see?"

"Several goats. Perhaps, if we are careful, we can get a shot at them. Fresh goat meat won't go bad."

"What's the matter with capturing some of the goats and getting the milk?" came from Sam.

"You'll have a job catching wild goats," answered Captain Blossom. "They are as fleet of foot as deer."

It was decided to try two shots at the goats, providing they could get close enough. With care they plunged into the undergrowth and made their way back up the hillside until they thought they must be within fifty yards of the game.

"There they are!" cried Tom softly.

Bang! went the captain's gun, and crack! Tom fired immediately after. Two of the goats were hit, and one fell dead. The other staggered away with a broken foreleg.

"We must get that second fellow!" cried Sam, and rushed after the game. The goat tried to turn on him, but Sam hit the beast over the head with a club he carried. Two other blows finished the animal.

"That isn't bad," said the captain. "They both look to be young. They ought to make good eating."

"We are going to have no easy work of it, getting these animals down to the shore," said Tom.

"After we get them to the shore, what then?" questioned his brother. "We can't keep them in the boat all the time that we are exploring the other islands."

"We had best make a trip back to the house," answered Captain Blossom. "If the others heard the shots they'll be wondering what has happened; besides, a storm is coming up."

The captain said he would carry the smaller of the goats alone, leaving the two Rovers to carry the larger game between them. After a rest and another look around the vicinity, they started for the boat and reached it after a walk which almost exhausted every one of the party.

"I'll be glad enough to lay around our camp and rest for a day," announced Sam. "This task of exploring is not as easy as it looks."

A little later they were in the boat and rowing back to where they had left the others, little dreaming of the strange events that had happened in their absence.

CHAPTER XVIII

UNEXPECTED VISITORS

It had been decided by the castaways to enlarge one of the rooms of the house, and as soon as the captain, Tom, and Sam had departed on their exploring tour, Dick and old Jerry set to work to cut down the posts necessary for the building.

While this was going on the three girls were by no means idle. There were meals to get, dishes to wash, and it had been found that outdoor life was very rough on clothing, so there was a good bit of sewing and darning to be done. Fortunately all of the girls were handy with a needle, so that a rent in a coat or a dress received immediate attention.

"Now you must make the alteration in the house very nice," said Dora to Dick. "Remember, we want a regular Queen Anne building, with round bay windows, and—"

"And inlaid floors," finished Dick, "not to mention steam heat, and—"

"Mercy on us!" burst in Grace. "Don't mention steam heat in this climate."

"Of course we want hot and cold water in the kitchen," put in Nellie. "What sort of a mansion would it be without hot and cold water,—and a dumb waiter from the cellar, too," and then all began to laugh.

"I know what I should like," said Dora, after a pause. "That would be a refrigerator."

"If we had the ice," finished Nellie. "Dick, isn't there any ice on board of the *Golden Wave*?"

"By Jove! I think there is," cried the oldest Rover boy. "I never once thought of it before."

"If there is, I wish you'd bring some the next time you go over. We have lemons, and we could make delicious lemonade."

"And we could make orange ice, too," put in Grace. "I know there was an ice-cream freezer on board of the ship. It was in the cook's galley."

Old Jerry was coming to the house with a small tree he had cut down, and Dick sounded him about the ice.

"To be sure there was ice, several tons of it," said Jerry. "It was stowed away near the bow. I don't believe it's all melted, either."

"I'm going over to see," cried Dick. "We've got plenty of lemons and sugar; and lemonade, not to mention orange ice, would just strike the spot in this awfully hot weather."

But as it was now noon, with the sun directly overhead, Dick decided to remain in the shade until four or five o'clock. Dinner was had, and then the work of enlarging the house went on as before.

At half-past four Dick got out the rowboat and started for the wreck. He had first thought to go alone, but old Jerry wanted to pick out certain tools needed for the house-building, as well as hunt for a keg of nails, and the two decided to go together, going and coming as quickly as possible.

"You won't be afraid to be alone, will you?" asked Dick, of the girls.

"Not if you hurry," answered Nellie. "But don't stay away after dark."

Left to themselves, the three girls swept up the chips the builders had left and started up the camp-fire. Then they tidied up the house generally, and soon set about preparing the supper.

Dora was at the spring getting a pail of water when a sound on the rocks nearby caused her to look around in wonder. To her amazement Dan Baxter stood there, staring at her in open-mouthed astonishment.

"Dan Baxter!" she gasped. "Where in the world did you come from?"

For a moment the bully did not answer, so great was his amazement. Dora noted that he was dirty and unkempt, and that his clothing was almost in rags.

"Is it you, Dora Stanhope?" came slowly from the fellow's lips. "Is it really you?"

"Yes," she answered.

"How did you get here? Are you alone?" went on Baxter, coming closer.
And then before she could answer, he added: "Got anything to eat?"

At the last question she looked at him more closely, and saw that he appeared half starved. She pitied him despite his character.

"Yes, we have plenty to eat," she said.

"Then give me something at once," he cried. "Give me something at once!"

"Come with me."

There was now a crashing in the bushes back of Dan Baxter, and in a second more Jack Lesher appeared on the scene. He too was haggard and dirty, and his eyes were much blood-shot, the result of living almost entirely on liquor for several days after being wrecked on the islands.

"Well, is it possible!" cried the mate of the *Golden Wave*.

"They've got lots to eat," muttered Dan Baxter. "I'm going to have something to fill me up before I start to talk."

"How many more of you are here?" asked Dora, in something of dismay.

"We came along alone," said Baxter. "Show us that grub."

Dora led the way to the camp-fire, where Nellie and Grace were also surprised at the unexpected visitors. Some food was brought forth, and both Baxter and Lesher ate like two famished wolves.

"Got any liquor?" questioned the mate, casting his eyes toward the house.

"We have a little," answered Nellie, for Captain Blossom had brought over several bottles from the wreck.

"Bring it out."

When the liquor was brought Jack Lesher took a long draught and then handed the bottle to Dan Baxter.

"That's the stuff!" cried the mate, with a sly wink at Dora. "Better than eatin,' twice over," and he took another drink.

The manner of the two newcomers was not at all pleasing to the girls, and they were sorry that none of the men folks were at hand. They asked the pair to tell their story, and Baxter spoke up, while Lesher applied himself to the bottle.

"We floated around the ocean for several days," said the bully. "One sailor went crazy from the sunshine and leaped overboard, and was drowned. Then a heavy wind came up and drove the boat, in the night, onto an island close to this one. We were cast ashore with hardly any provisions, and two of the sailors were sick. We had to live on fish, birds, and fruit, and we've had a hard lot of it, I can tell you that. Yesterday Lesher and I resolved to explore this island, thinking that perhaps some of the wreckage from the schooner had washed ashore here. We came over in the afternoon and tramped along the north shore until it grew dark, but without finding anything. We slept at the shore

last night, and this morning started to go over the hill back there. But the snakes chased us off, and then we came around over some rough rocks, where both of us got our clothing torn. We thought we saw a flag up there somewhere, but we weren't sure."

"Yes, we have a signal of distress up there," answered Dora. She hardly knew how best to reply.

"Who is here?"

"Captain Blossom, old Jerry Tolman, and the three Rover boys. Old Jerry and Dick have just gone over to the wreck en an errand. The others have gone on an exploring tour among the islands, which are seven in number."

"Got the wreck, have yer!" came in almost a grunt from Jack Lesher. "Sure enough!" He staggered down to the beach. "Don't see why you stay here when you might be aboard of her."

"It is cooler here," answered Nellie.

"How many sailors were saved?" asked Grace.

"Nine were saved, besides Lesher and myself," answered Dan Baxter. "You see, we picked up some of the men from one of the other boats."

"Then your party numbers eleven in all," said Dora.

"Yes," came from Jack Lesher. "An' I am the cap'n of the lot," and he bobbed his head in satisfaction. He had partaken of just enough liquor to make him foolish.

"I wish Dick and old Jerry would come back," whispered Grace to Dora.
"I do not like Mr. Lesher at all."

"I never liked him," replied Dora. "When he gets intoxicated he is a bad fellow to deal with."

"Reckon we'll make ourselves comfortable here," said Lesher, staggering to a hammock Dick had put up for the girls to rest in. He pitched into the hammock, carrying a bottle of liquor with him. Another drink was taken, and soon he was fast asleep, snoring loudly.

CHAPTER XIX

HOT WORDS AND BLOWS

"What a shame!" said Nellie, pointing to the slumbering mate.

"That shows what liquor will do," came from Dora.

"Oh, you mustn't blame him too much," returned Dan Baxter, who also liked the taste of the liquor. "Remember that we have been living a dog's life since we came on shore, while you have been living on the best the ship affords."

"I wouldn't touch liquor if I was starving!" cried Grace.

"And neither would the Rover boys," added Dora.

"Oh, you think the Rover boys are regular saints!" grumbled the bully. "You don't know what they would do behind your back."

"If they said they wouldn't drink they wouldn't," cried Nellie, her eyes flashing. "We can trust them every time."

"I suppose the Rover boys run this place to suit themselves," went on Baxter, eying the house and the general appearance of the camp sharply.

"We all run it together," came from Grace.

"Isn't Captain Blossom, in command?"

"After a fashion, yes. We haven't tried to decide that point yet. Have you a leader in your camp?"

"Not much of a one. Lesher is leader when he is sober. Of course we'll all come over here, now we've found you and the wreck," went on Dan Baxter.

"But why should you come here?" asked Dora, not at all pleased by the prospect. "We can let you have your share of what's on board of the schooner."

"Don't want me here, eh?"

"I don't care for all of those rough sailors."

"Well, they are Captain Blossom's men, you mustn't forget that."

"I suppose that is true," and Dora sighed. With the coming of the sailors she was certain the camp would not be as pleasant as formerly.

"I don't think you ought to be down on me, Dora," continued Dan Baxter, after a pause. "I always liked you, and you know it."

"Thank you for nothing," she replied coldly.

"I'm just as good a fellow as Dick Rover," went on the bully, and laid his hand on the girl's shoulder.

"Don't touch me, Dan Baxter!" she cried.

"I won't hurt you. Come, let us be friends. Surely you don't want any enemies here, where there are only a handful of us, all told."

"I want you to leave me alone."

She tried to move away from him, but he caught her by the arm and tried to hold her hands. Grace and Nellie were out of sight, the one having gone into the house for some dishes, and the other to the spring for some water.

"Say that you'll be friends, and I'll let you go," he said, drawing her closer.

"I won't be friends with you, Dan Baxter, so there!" she cried. "Now let me go!" And she tried to push him away.

"You—you little cat!" he cried, and then, as she let out a loud cry, he let go of her. "What a little fool you are!" And he walked away to the trees, and threw himself down to rest.

Red in the face and ready to cry, Dora ran into the house. Grace looked at her in wonder.

"What is the trouble, Dora?"

"Nothing."

"Did Dan Baxter try to—to—"

"He wants to be—be friends!" sobbed Dora. "He held my hand so I couldn't get away. Oh, how I despise him!"

"Just wait till Dick comes back; he'll make Baxter mind his own business."

"Oh, don't tell him, Grace."

"But I shall, Dora. Baxter has got to keep his distance. I hate him myself, and so does Nellie."

"I wish he and Mr. Lesher had kept their distance."

"Do you think they will really come here—I mean all of the sailors?"

"More than likely."

The girls continued their work, and for the time being Dan Baxter kept his distance. Jack Lesher continued to snore away in the hammock, nor did he rouse up when Dick and old Jerry returned.

"Dan Baxter!" cried Dick, as he leaped from the rowboat. "Where did you come from?" And then the story of the newcomers had to be told over again.

Dick eyed Jack Lesher with open disgust. "A man who will act like that has no welcome in our camp," he said to Baxter.

"You don't mean you are going to turn him out," said the bully, in alarm.

"If he stays here he must behave himself."

"You forget that he was the first mate of the schooner, Dick Rover."

"We are not on the schooner now."

"No, but you are getting your living—or the largest part of it—from the schooner."

"What do you mean, Baxter?"

"I mean that it's the same as if you were on the schooner. And that being so, Mr. Lesher is the second in command here."

At this statement the girls looked alarmed, and even old Jerry's face showed his uneasiness. But Dick's face was full of contempt.

"Do you mean to say that thing "—pointing to the drunken mate—" that thing can command any of us? If you do, let me say right now that you are mistaken."

"We'll see about that later."

"This is our camp, and it is not for you, the mate, or anybody else to come here and dictate to us. If you try that, we'll send you off in double-quick order."

There was a pause, and Dick and old Jerry began to unload the things they had brought from the wreck. They had found a large cake of ice. But the coming of Baxter and Jack Lesher had taken away the pleasure of making lemonade and orange ice, and the lump was placed in some water to cool it for drinking purposes.

As soon as Grace could get the chance she told Dick of the way Dan Baxter had treated Dora. At once Dick's face took on a stern look that boded the bully no good.

"I'll have a talk with him and come to an understanding," said the eldest Rover, and strode out of the house and to where Baxter was walking up the beach, picking up fancy-colored sea-shells.

"Look here, Baxter, I want to have an understanding with you," he said, catching the bully by the arm.

"What do you want now?"

"I want you to promise to leave Dora Stanhope alone in the future."

"How I treat her is none of your business," blustered the bully.

"But it is my business, Baxter."

"See here, Dick Rover, I won't be bossed by you!" howled the tall youth. "You mind your own business."

"If you touch her again, there will be trouble."

"What will you do?"

"I'll give you the worst thrashing you ever had in your life."

"Two can play at that game."

"There will be only one in this game."

"Do you want to fight me?"

"I am perfectly willing," responded Dick recklessly. His anger was deep at that moment.

"All right then, come on!" howled Baxter savagely, and, squaring off, he aimed a blow at Dick's face.

The attack was so sudden that Dick could scarcely prepare for it, and though he dodged, Baxter's fist landed glancingly on his cheek.

"There you are, and here's another!" cried the bully, and his other fist shot out, catching Dick on the shoulder.

But now the oldest Rover was on his guard, and in a twinkle he let drive, taking Dan Baxter in the eye. It was a staggering blow, and made the bully gasp with pain. Then Dick followed it up by a crashing blow on the chin, which sent the bully reeling into the low water on the beach.

"Don't—don't run me into the ocean!" he spluttered, and, watching his chance, ran out of the water and up the beach.

But Dick was now thoroughly aroused, and he made after Baxter. When he got close enough, he put out his foot and sent the bully sprawling. Baxter came down on some rough sea-shells, cutting his face and hands in several places.

"Oh! oh!" he howled. "Stop it!"

"I will not stop it, Dan Baxter, until you promise to let Dora Stanhope and the other girls alone in the future. They want nothing to do with you, and you must keep your distance."

"I—I didn't hurt anybody."

"Do you promise to let them alone?"

Without replying, the bully staggered to his feet. The blood was running from his nose and from a cut on his chin, and both of his hands were also bleeding.

"Do you want to kill me, Dick Rover?"

"I want you to behave yourself. Come, now, are you going to promise?"

"What if I don't?"

"Then I'll give you the thrashing I promised."

"All right, I'm cornered, and can't help myself."

"Will you let the girls alone in the future?"

"Yes. If they don't want to be friends, I'm sure I can get along without them," answered Baxter sulkily.

"Very well; now see that you keep your promise. If you don't, I'll run you out of camp and never let you come near us again."

With these words Dick turned on his heel and walked away, leaving Baxter to wash his cuts and bruises in the ocean and otherwise care for them as best he could.

CHAPTER XX

THE MATE TRIES TO TAKE COMMAND

The fight had taken place around a bend of the shore, so that it was not observed by old Jerry and the girls. But when Dick got back to camp Dora at once noticed that something unusual had happened.

"What is wrong, Dick?" she asked.

"Oh, nothing much, Dora. I merely made Dan Baxter promise to keep his distance in the future."

"Did you have a fight?"

"It didn't amount to much. He had to give in pretty quickly."

"Oh, Dick!" She caught his arm.

"I won't have him annoying you, or the others, Dora."

"You are so good!" she whispered.

Supper was ready, and they sat down, leaving Jack Lesher still in the hammock. They had nearly finished when Dan Baxter came shuffling along.

"Do you want some supper?" asked Dick. "If you do, come on."

"I don't want anything more to-night," growled the bully, and sat down beside Jack Lesher.

It was rather an uncomfortable evening. The thoughts of each of the party were busy. At the first opportunity Dick called old Jerry to one side.

"Jerry, we must watch those two fellows closely," he said.

"Right ye are, Dick."

"I am afraid Lesher will be ugly when he wakes up."

"More'n likely, lad—he always was on board ship. The drink gives him an awful temper."

"I am, going to put the liquor where he can't get it."

"He'll make ye give it to him."

"Will he? Just you wait and see," replied Dick firmly.

It was decided to let Lesher rest in the hammock all night. Baxter was given a cot in the living room of the house. Soon all had retired, and the camp was quiet for the night.

Dan Baxter was the first to stir in the morning. His cuts smarted so he could not sleep, and he walked out to bathe them and put on some salve Nellie had generously turned over to him. He found Jack Lesher stirring.

"Hullo!" grumbled the mate, sitting up and yawning. "Where am I?"

"Don't you know we struck camp?" answered Baxter.

"Oh, yes, I remember now. Got some good liquor, too. Where is that bottle?"

"You emptied it, Lesher."

"Did I? Too bad! I'll have to find another. Where are the girls?"

"Asleep in the house, and so are Dick Rover and old Jerry Tolman."

"What of Cap'n Blossom and them other Rover boys?"

"They are not expected back for several days."

"Humph! Say, I feel bad, I do. I must have something to brace me up."

"You'd better not disturb them, Lesher. They are mighty stiff-necked since they landed here."

"What do you mean?"

"They gave me to understand yesterday that they were going to run things to suit themselves. They are not going to let us interfere in anything."

"I like that!" The mate yawned again, rose, and stretched himself. "Baxter, do you know where they keep the liquor?"

"No."

"I'm bound to have what I want. Didn't it all come from the Golden Wave, and aint I the first mate of that craft?"

"To be sure you are, Lesher."

"They can't make me take a back seat," went on the mate. His head was still far from clear.

"I told them that you were second in command—Captain Blossom being first—but they wouldn't listen. They said they were on land, and you didn't count."

"Don't I count!" cried Jack Lesher, his blood-shot eyes taking on an ugly look. "I'll show 'em!"

Just then old Jerry came from the house. Jack Lesher staggered toward him.

"Ahoy there!" he called out.

"What do you want, Mr. Lesher?" questioned old Jerry, and touched his forelock.

"Bring me some liquor, and be quick about it."

"I haven't any liquor."

"What's that?"

"I said I haven't any liquor."

"Aint there any more liquor ashore?"

"If there is, I don't know where it is."

"Then find out, and be quick about it, or I'll give you the rope's-end!" roared the unreasonable mate.

The loud talking aroused Dick, and he soon came out.

"What's the matter here?" he asked. "Oh, so you have woke up," he went on to Jack Lesher.

"Yes, I'm awake, Rover. And I want to know where the liquor has been placed."

"It's been placed where you won't get hold of it, Mr. Lesher."

"What! This to me!" yelled the mate, in fury. "To me, the first mate!"

"A first mate doesn't count for anything here. This is a private camp, and if you don't behave yourself we'll pitch you out of it."

"You—you—" Jack Lesher could not go on, and shook his fist in Dick's face.

"I told you what they intended to do," whispered Dan Baxter in Lesher's ear. "They have the upper hand and mean to keep it. But don't forget that we have nine sailors in our camp to back us up," he went on suggestively.

"Don't grow abusive, Mr. Lesher," said Dick as calmly as he could. "Just think the matter over. It may save a good deal of trouble."

"I don't have to think it over!" bellowed the mate. "During Cap'n Blossom's absence I am in command, just as much as if we were on the deck of the wreck over there. You were only passengers, but Jerry Tolman was a sailor, and he's under my command. I told him to bring me

some liquor, and he has got to do it. If he won't obey, it's mutiny, just you remember that!" And he shook his finger warningly in old Jerry's face.

"I told ye I don't know where the liquor is," answered old Jerry doggedly.

"And he tells the truth," said Dick. "I put it away myself."

"Then I command you to bring it to me."

"I told you before your commands don't hold water here. Even old Jerry hasn't got to obey you. When the *Golden Wave* was abandoned that ended your authority. We have simply made Captain Blossom our leader because he acted fair and square. But we don't have to obey him if we don't want to."

"What of the nine sailors who are with me?"

"We'll be pleased to give them their full share of what is on the wreck, and if they behave themselves they can build a camp right next to this one. But you must remember that we discovered the wreck first, and that Captain Blossom was the only man left on board."

"We'll see what the men have to say about this," growled Lesher. "Then you aint going to give me no liquor?"

"You can have one glass with your breakfast, and that is all. After this you can have the regulation ship's grog, with the other sailors. But getting drunk has got to be stopped, even if we have to dump all the liquor into the ocean."

By this time the girls had appeared on the scene, and the talk came to an end, Dick turning in to help get breakfast. Jack Lesher walked down to the beach, followed by Dan Baxter.

"You see, it is just as I told you," said Baxter. "They are going to ride right over us."

"They wouldn't ride over us if I had those other sailors here," growled the mate.

"Or if we were armed," went on the bully. "I tried to get hold of a pistol, but Dick Rover watches me like a cat watches a mouse."

"If we could get to the wreck we might arm ourselves," said Lesher. "Here is a boat; let us row over."

"I'm willing," answered the bully.

They walked to the boat, shoved it into the water, and leaped in. Just as Lesher picked up the oars Dick saw what they were doing.

"Stop!" he cried.

"What do you want?" growled the mate.

"Where are you going?"

"Over to the wreck."

"What for?"

"That is our business," put in Dan Baxter.

"You shan't go over there until Captain Blossom comes back."

"We'll go when we please," said Lesher, and started to row away.

"Come back, I say!" cried Dick, and, rushing into the house, he appeared with a shot-gun.

"What are you going to do, Dick Rover?" questioned Baxter in alarm.

"I am going to make you come back," was the oldest Rover's very quiet, but determined, answer.

CHAPTER XXI

THE ATTACK ON THE WRECK

The appearance of Dick with the shot-gun disturbed Jack Lesher quite as much as it did Dan Baxter, and the mate stopped rowing instantly.

"Hi! don't you fire at us!" he cried.

"Then come back here," said Dick.

"Haven't I a right to visit the wreck?"

"I am not sure that you have. Anyway, you must wait until Captain Blossom returns."

"It seems to me that you are carrying matters with a high hand, young fellow."

"Oh, Dick, be careful!" whispered Dora. "They may become desperate."

"Don't worry, Dora," he whispered in return. Unless I miss my guess, one is as big a coward as the other."

"I hope ye aint goin' too far, Dick," said old Jerry, in a low tone.

"Don't you intend to stand by me, Jerry?"

"To be sure I do; but the mate is the mate, ye know."

There was an uncertain pause all around.

"There is no harm in my visiting the wreck," growled Jack Lesher presently.

"Perhaps not, but you had better wait until Captain Blossom gets back."

"I only want to get some things that belong to me."

"And I want to get my extra clothes," said Baxter. "These are in rags, as you can see."

"Then wait until after breakfast and we'll all go over," said Dick, but he had scarcely spoken when he felt sorry for the words.

"Oh, Dick, don't trust yourself with them!" cautioned Dora.

"We want to hurry, for I want to go back to where I left the sailors before night," answered Lesher.

"Then we'll have breakfast at once."

Rather reluctantly the mate turned back to the shore and he and Baxter left the boat. Then the girls prepared breakfast with all haste.
Lesher ate but little, but eagerly tossed off the glass of liquor
Dick allowed him.

"Give me one more," he pleaded, but Dick was firm, and the mate stalked away muttering under his breath.

Before Dick entered the rowboat he called Jerry aside, and handed the old sailor a pistol.

"We had better go armed," he said. "Keep your eyes open, for they may try to play us a foul trick. And don't let Lesher talk you into obeying him. He has no authority whatever over you."

"All right, Dick, I'll stand by ye always from this minit on," said
Jerry, and the compact was sealed by a handshake.

The girls came down to see them off, and Dora warned Dick again to be on guard. It was decided that Lesher and old Jerry should do the rowing. Baxter sat in the bow of the boat, and Dick in the stern.

The trip to the wreck was accomplished in almost utter silence. Everybody was busy with his thoughts. As they drew near Dick showed the mate where a ladder hung from the side, and as they drew close to this Baxter was the first to mount to the deck.

As Dick had surmised, Lesher's first hunt was for liquor, and he drank several glasses at a gulp. Then he began to roam around the wreck, noting the damage that had been done and the amount of stores still on board.

"Might float her, if the tide got extra high," he said. "Eleven men in our crowd and five in your own ought to be able to do something, surely."

"The captain says the ship is too deep in the sand," answered Dick briefly.

"Blossom don't know everything," growled the mate.

Both he and Baxter soon found some comfortable clothing, and put it on. Then they made up a bundle of things they said the other sailors needed.

When arming themselves, the Rovers and Captain Blossom had placed all of the remaining firearms in a stateroom and locked the door.

"What did you do with all of the guns and pistols?" asked Lesher presently, after looking in vain for them.

"They are packed away in a stateroom. Captain Blossom thought it wouldn't do to leave them lying loose. Some savages might come to the islands and steal them, and then we'd be in a bad hole."

"We've got to have some guns and pistols, Rover."

"Well, you can see the captain about that."

"I shan't wait. Which stateroom are they in?"

Dick would not tell the mate, and Lesher went around trying the various doors. Coming to one that was locked he burst it open with his shoulder.

Dick scarcely knew what to do, and while he was trying to make up his mind Jack Lesher secured a pistol and a rifle, and also a pistol for Dan Baxter. He would have taken more fire-arms, but Dick stopped him.

"That is enough," he said.

"I want some for the men," said the first mate.

"They can get pistols from Captain Blossom when they get here."

"Humph! You think you are in sole command, don't you?"

"I am not going to allow you to take away all the firearms that are here, Mr. Lesher."

"We'll see:"

The mate went into the pantry and secured another glass of liquor. Then he ordered old Jerry to take the bundle of clothing and put it in the rowboat.

"I've got some money on this schooner," he said. "I want to see if that's safe, or if you have stolen it."

"We haven't touched any money," answered Dick, his face flushing. "It would be of no use to us on these islands."

"You come with me while I take a look," said Lesher.

Behind his back he waved his hand for Baxter to follow. All three went below again, and into a stateroom the mate had occupied.

"The money was in that chest," said the mate. He threw open the lid. "It's gone!" he cried.

Interested for the moment, Dick bent forward to look in the chest. As he did so, Lesher suddenly hit him a savage blow over the head with the

butt of a pistol. The blow was a heavy one, and Dick fell like a log to the floor.

"Oh!" came from Baxter. "Have you killed him?"

"No; only knocked the senses out of him," answered Lesher, bending over his victim.

"What did you do it for?"

"To teach him a lesson. He shan't boss me, Baxter. Come, help me put him in the brig, and be quick, before Jerry comes back."

They lifted up the insensible form and made their way to where the ship's brig was located, a dirty closet once used for oil and lanterns. Dick was thrown on the floor, and the mate shut the door on him and locked it.

"Now he can stay there for a day or two," he snarled. "Reckon it will teach him a lesson."

"What will you do with the sailor?"

Before Lesher could answer old Jerry appeared.

"Where is Dick Rover?" he asked.

"None of your business," growled Jack Lesher. "See here, Tolman, are you going to obey me after this?"

"I want to know where Dick is?" said old Jerry stubbornly.

"I put him in the brig to cool off. He's too hot-headed for his own good."

"You had no right to lock him up, Mr. Lesher. You must let him out at once."

"Git out of here, quick!" roared Lesher. "On deck, or I'll flog you well!"

"Ye won't tech me!" cried Jerry, his temper rising. "I aint under orders no more, mind that. Now you let him out, or I'll do it. You was a fool to lock him up in the first place."

He moved toward the brig, but Lesher caught him by the arm.

"Let's teach this chap a lesson, too!" came from Baxter, and, like a flash, he struck old Jerry in the back of the head. The first blow was followed by a second, and down went the tar, the blood oozing from one of his wounds.

"Don't hit him again!" cried Lesher hastily. "He's out already."

Baxter grew pale, thinking he had gone too far. But he soon discovered that Jerry still breathed, and then he felt relieved.

It was decided by the pair that they should place old Jerry beside Dick in the brig, and this was quickly done. Then they put into the prison a bucket of drinking water and a can of ship's biscuits, and another of baked beans.

"They won't starve on that," said Lesher. "And when they get out they'll understand that I am as much of a master here as anybody."

"It serves Dick Rover right," said Baxter. "He's the kind that ought to be kept under foot all the time."

CHAPTER XXII

A HEAVY TROPICAL STORM

"Those girls will ask some awkward questions, I reckon," said Jack Lesher, as the two prepared to leave the wreck.

"We had better not say too much," answered Baxter.

They were soon over the side and in the rowboat, which contained the bundle of clothing and a number of other articles. Then an idea struck the mate.

"Wait; I am going back," he said, and disappeared on the deck one more.

Dan Baxter imagined that Lesher had gone for more liquor. But he was mistaken. When the mate reappeared, he carried a box containing half a dozen pistols, two guns, and a quantity of ammunition.

"I am going to hide this in the woods on the other side of this island," he said. "The firearms may come in handy before long."

"A good idea," replied Baxter, and helped him place the case in a desirable spot, under some rocks, where the rain could not touch it.

"We are going to have a storm before long," said the mate, as they started to row back to the camp. "And if it is a heavy one we'll have to wait till it clears off before we rejoin the rest of our crowd."

The sky was growing dark, and by the time the beach in front of the house was gained the rain was falling.

"Where are Dick and, old Jerry?" asked Dora in quick alarm. She had noted long before that only Baxter and the mate were in the rowboat.

"They stayed behind on the wreck," answered Lesher. "Come, help get the bundles out of the wet," he added to his companion.

"Why did they stay?" asked Nellie.

"Don't ask me," growled Lesher.

He and Baxter took the bundle to the house and dumped it on the floor of the living room. Then they brought in the other things from the boat. By this time it was raining in torrents, and from a distance came the rumble of thunder and occasionally the faint flash of lightning.

Not wishing to remain out in the storm, the three girls came into the house.—"Dora was very much disturbed, and Nellie and Grace were also anxious.

"It is queer that Dick and old Jerry remained behind," whispered Dora to her cousins. "They were so anxious to protect us before."

"I cannot understand it, Dora," returned Nellie.

"There has been foul play somewhere," came from Grace.

"Oh, do you think—" Dora could not finish.

"See here!" burst in the voice of Jack Lesher. "We want some dinner. Don't be all day getting it for us."

The liquor he had imbibed was beginning to tell upon him.. He looked ugly, and the girls trembled before him.

"Dinner will be ready in a quarter of an hour," said Grace, who had been doing the cooking.

"All right." Lesher turned to the bully: "Baxter, join me in a glass of rum for luck."

"Thanks, I will," answered Dan Baxter, who did not particularly want the liquor, but did not dream of offending the mate.

Lesher produced a bottle he had brought away from the wreck, prepared two glasses of rum, and drank with great relish. Then he threw himself into a chair at the rude dining-table.

"I am the master here, and I want everybody to know it!" he exclaimed, banging his fist savagely.

"There is dinner," said Grace, and brought it in. "You can help yourself." And she went into the next room to join Nellie and Dora.

"Aint going to wait on us, eh?" grumbled Lesher, with a hiccough. "All right, my fine ladies. But I am master, don't you forget that!"

He began to eat leisurely, while Dan Baxter began to bolt his food. In the meantime the sky grew darker and the flashes of lightning more vivid. The girls were greatly frightened, and huddled together, while tears stood on Grace's cheeks.

"Oh, if only somebody was with us," sighed Nellie.

By the time Lesher and Baxter had finished eating the storm was on them in all of its violence. The wind shrieked and tore through the jungle behind them, and often they could hear some tall tree go down with a crash.

"This will tear our flag of distress to shreds," said Nellie. "And just when we need it so much, too!"

"I am thinking of the future as well as the present," said Dora. "What a rough time there will be if Lesher brings those other sailors here. Some of them were heavy drinkers like himself, and only two or three were Americans."

The storm had whipped the waters of the bay into a fury, and the rain was so thick that to see even the island on which the wreck rested was impossible.

"Dick can't come now," said Dora. "A boat on the bay would surely go down."

Having finished the meal, Lesher and Baxter sat down in the living room to smoke and to talk over the situation. The mate continued to drink, and half an hour later he fell asleep, sitting on the bench, and with his head on the table.

"The beast!" said Dora, as she peeped out at him. "Well, there is one satisfaction," she continued: "he cannot harm us while he is asleep."

"You girls better have your own dinner," called out Baxter. "I aint going to eat you up."

"We will get our dinner when we please," said Nellie, as she came out. "We are not afraid of you, Dan Baxter."

No more was said for a long time. The girls ate what little they wished and washed up the dishes. The rain still continued to fall in torrents, but the thunder and' lightning drifted away to the eastward.

Dora was the most anxious of the trio, and at every opportunity she tried to look through the driving rain toward the wreck.

"I'd give almost anything to know if Dick is safe," she murmured.

"Don't be discouraged, Dora," said Grace. "Perhaps he will return as soon as the storm is over."

The girls were huddled close to a window, looking out into the rain, when Dan Baxter threw aside the pipe he had been smoking and approached them.

"See here, girls," he said, "why can't we be friends? What is the use of being enemies in such a place as this?"

"Dan Baxter, we want you to keep your distance," said Nellie coldly.

"And if you do not, it will be the worse for you when the others come back," put in Grace.

"Humph! I reckon you think it is fine to ride such a high horse," sneered the bully. "What are you going to do when we bring the rest of the sailors over here? We'll be eleven to seven then."

"Never mind what we'll do," said Dora. "I would rather have the company of some of those sailors than your company."

"That is where you make a mistake. The sailors are all rough fellows, some of them worse than Jack Lesher. Now, if you are willing to count me as a friend, I'll stand by you when the crowd comes over."

"We don't want your friendship, Dan Baxter, so there!" cried Nellie. "We know your past, and we know that you cannot be trusted."

"Don't think I am as good as the Rovers, eh?"

"We all know that you are not," answered Grace.

"What have you done to Dick Rover?" questioned Dora. "He ought to be here long before this."

"Oh, I guess the storm is holding him back," said Baxter, shifting uneasily as she gazed earnestly into his eyes.

"If anything has happened to Dick, I shall hold you responsible," said Dora.

At that moment the fury of the storm cut off further talking. A sudden rush of wind had come up, whistling through the jungle and bringing down a palm close to the house with a crash. The fall of the tree made Baxter jump in alarm.

"The house is coming down!" he cried, and ran outside.

The wind made the waves in the bay rise higher and higher until they lashed furiously in all directions. Then came another downpour of rain, which caused the bully to seek shelter again.

"Hark!" said Nellie suddenly, and raised her hand for silence.

"What did you hear?" asked Grace.

"Somebody calling. Listen!"

All were silent once more, and just then the wind fell a little.

"I don't hear anything," said Dora.

But then followed a distant voice—two voices calling desperately:

"Help! help! Our boat is sinking! Help!"

CHAPTER XXIII

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE BAY

To go back to Tom, Sam, and Captain Blossom at the time that they placed the two dead goats in their rowboat and prepared to return to the camp.

It was already raining by the time the shore of the bay was reached, and scarcely had they begun to row when the water came pouring down in torrents.

"Gracious! I must say I don't like this!" cried Tom. "The rain is running down my neck in a stream."

"I move we row into shore over yonder," said Sam, pointing up the coast. "There are some trees which will shelter both us and the boat nicely."

Captain Blossom was willing, and in a few minutes they were under the trees and wringing out their clothes as best they could.

"If I know anything about it, this storm is going to last for some time," said the captain, after a long look at the sky.

"Such a downfall as this can't last," said Sam. "Perhaps we can get home between showers."

It was dry under the trees for about half an hour, but then the water began to reach them once more, and they had to shift their position again.

This kept up for some time, until all were wet through and thoroughly uncomfortable, when Tom proposed that they start for home regardless of the storm.

"We can't get any wetter than we are," he declared. "And the sooner we reach the house the sooner we'll be able to change our clothes."

The others agreed, and when the worst of the lightning and thunder had passed they set off once more, two rowing and the third steering the boat and bailing out the water, which came in faster than was desirable.

"When it rains in the tropics, it rains," observed Tom. "Puts me in mind of that storm we met when we were in Africa. Do you remember, Sam?"

"Indeed, I do," answered his brother. "I thought we'd all be killed by the trees that fell in the jungle."

"Have you been in Africa?" came from Captain Blossom in astonishment.

"Yes," answered Tom. "Our father got lost there once, and we went in search of him," and he gave a few of the particulars, as already related in another volume of this series, entitled "The Rover Boys in the Jungle."

"Well, you boys have had some ups and downs," said the captain. "But
I reckon you weren't cast away before like this."

"Not like this," answered Sam. "But we were left on a lonely island once in Lake Huron," and he related a few particulars of their exciting experiences with the Baxters while on the Great Lakes.

Another downpour of rain cut off the talking, and Tom was kept busy bailing out the row-boat. With three persons and the two dead goats the craft was pretty heavily loaded, and more than once the rising wind swept some water over the bow.

"I'd give a little to be ashore again," said Tom presently. "It seems to me that the rain is shutting out everything."

"We'll have to land again, lads," put in the captain, with a grave shake of his head. "This wind is growing worse. We don't want to be swamped."

They turned to what they thought must be the direction of the nearest shore, but though they pulled with might and main for nearly quarter of an hour no land appeared.

"We're mixed," cried Sam. "The storm has twisted us up."

By this time the wind was blowing a regular gale on the bay. It took off Tom's cap, and in a twinkle the headgear was out of sight.

"My cap's gone!" groaned the youth.

"The water is coming in over the bow!" came from Sam. "We will be swamped!"

"We must throw the goats overboard," said the captain, and overboard went the game, much to the boys' sorrow.

This lightened the craft a little, but still the waves swept over the gunwale, and now both Sam and Tom set to bailing, while the captain took both oars. Then came another blast of wind, worse than before.

"I see land!" cried Sam.

"We are going over!" yelled Tom, and the wind fairly whipped the words from his lips. Then came a mighty wave, and on the instant the rowboat was upset, and all three found themselves in the waters of the bay.

As they went under the same thought was in the mind of each: Were there any sharks around?

"Help! help!" cried Sam, as soon as he came up. "Our boat is sinking. Help!" And Tom soon joined in the cry. They had caught hold of the overturned boat, but the craft, for some reason, failed to support them.

Captain Blossom was close at hand, and he advised them to strike out for the shore.

"It's in this direction," he said, and led the way.

"I—I can't swim very far with my clothes on," gasped Sam, yet he struck out as best he could.

"Hullo! Who calls?" came a cry from the shore, and, looking up, they saw Dora standing there, with Nellie and Grace Laning close beside her.

"It's Tom and Sam!" cried Nellie.

"And Captain Blossom," added Grace.

"Perhaps we can throw them a rope," came from Dora, and she ran to get the article she had mentioned.

But by the time she returned the three swimmers had reached a point where they could touch bottom with their feet, and, watching for a favorable opportunity, they rushed ashore, almost into the arms of the girls.

"Oh, Tom, how glad I am that you are safe!" cried Nellie, while Grace caught hold of Sam and asked if he was all right.

"Yes, I am—am all right, but—but pretty well fagged out," gasped Sam.

"It was a close shave," said Captain Blossom. "And our guns are gone."

"We had two dead goats, too," put in Tom. "They went overboard first, and—goodness gracious—is that really Dan Baxter?"

"Dan Baxter!" ejaculated Sam, and even Captain Blossom stared in amazement.

"I see you've had a rough time of it," said Baxter, coming forward coolly. "How are you?"

He shook hands with Captain Blossom, while the Rover boys continued to stare at him.

"Are you alone?" asked the master of the *Golden Wave*.

"No, Jack Lesher is with me, and we left nine of the sailors on another island."

"Is that so? Where is Lesher now?"

"In the house, asleep."

"He is intoxicated," said Nellie. "We has been drinking ever since he put in an appearance."

"Humph! That's like Lesher," muttered the captain, and his brow darkened.

All moved toward the house, and entered to get out of the wet. The mate was still at the table, snoring loudly.

"Might as well let him sleep it off," said the captain. "But when he is sober I'll have a talk with him."

Wet clothing was changed for dry, and then the captain and the boys listened to what Baxter and the girls had to tell. The captain was glad to learn that so many of his men had been saved, and asked for the names.

"I don't care much about Peterson and McGlow," he said. "They are tough customers. I would rather have heard from Peabody, Dickson, and Fearwell. You don't know anything about them?"

"No," said Dan Baxter.

"This news about Dick and old Jerry worries me," said Tom.

"Dan Baxter, I think you know more than you care to tell," said Sam boldly.

The bully hardly knew how to reply. He could not now fall back on Jack Lesher for support, and he had thought to be on his way to rejoin

the sailors ere this. The storm had upset all of his calculations. It had been a foolish movement to attack Dick and old Jerry, and it now looked as if he must suffer for it.

"Well—er—I don't mind telling you that Dick and the mate had something of a quarrel," he said hesitatingly.

"How did it end?" asked Tom.

"I can't say exactly."

"Why not? You were with Lesher at the time."

"No, I wasn't. He ordered me to get into the rowboat and wait for him while he went back to get a pistol or a gun. I heard loud talking on the deck of the schooner, and I knew a row was on. I was just going back to the deck when the mate came and leaped into the rowboat. He said the sailor and Dick were going to remain behind, and that we wouldn't wait any longer. Then we rowed over here."

"If that's the case I'll make Lesher tell us what happened," cried Tom, and shook the mate roughly. "Wake up here!" he cried. "Wake up and give an account of yourself!"

CHAPTER XXIV

IN CLOSE QUARTERS

Slowly Dick came to his senses. He remembered little or nothing, and only knew that all was dark around him, and that his head was spinning like a top.

For several minutes he remained quiet, trying to collect his thoughts. Then he sat up and passed one hand slowly over his forehead.

"Oh, how my heed aches!" he murmured.

It was fully five minutes before he felt like moving around. Then he arose and took a step forward and stumbled over old Jerry's body.

"Oh!" he murmured, and felt of the body in the dark, "Who is this? Can it be Jerry?" he asked himself.

Then came a recollection of the cowardly attack. But what had followed was a blank, and he could not imagine where he was.

Dick remembered that he had a match safe in his pocket, and soon he made a light. By this he caught sight of a lantern in the brig and lit it. Then he bent over old Jerry, and saw that the sailor was still alive, but suffering from his treatment.

"He must have been attacked, too," murmured Dick. The bucket of water was at hand, And he took a drink and bathed Captain Jerry's forehead.

It was fully half an hour before the old sailor felt at all like himself. Both sat down to review the situation.

"The cowards!" said Dick. "What do you suppose they attacked us for?"

"Can't say as to that," replied old Jerry. "Perhaps Lesher wanted to show us he was master."

"He'll settle with me if I ever get out of this hole, Jerry. What place is this?"

"The lock-up of the *Golden Wave*. I think it used to be an oil room."

They gazed around them, and soon discovered the can of ship's biscuits and also the beans.

"They evidently meant to keep us prisoners for some time," said Dick. "Hark, what is that?"

Both listened, and made out the sounds of distant thunder and heard the patter of rain on the deck.

"A storm is brewing," said old Jerry. "It sounds as if it was putty heavy, too."

They tried the door to the brig, but found it locked and bolted. In vain Dick kicked against it, and shoved with his shoulder. It refused to budge.

"This looks as if we'd have to stay here—at least for the present," said Dick, with a sigh. "I must say I don't like the prospect."

"How long do ye calculate we've been here, lad?"

"There is no telling, unless by my watch." But when he looked at the timepiece, he found that it had stopped.

They ate some of the biscuits and drank some water and rested for a while longer. Outside the wind blew furiously and they heard the rain and the waves dash in all directions. Then some water came trickling in slowly, at one corner.

"It seems to me as if the wreck was shifting," cried Dick presently.

"It won't shift very far in this bed o' sand, lad. But she may break up and go to pieces," added old Jerry.

"If she goes down, we'll be drowned like rats in a trap," said Dick. "We must get out somehow."

They talked the matter over and began a systematic examination of their prison. The four walls were solid and so was the ceiling above them.

"The flooring has a couple of loose planks in it," announced. Dick. "If we can get them up, where will the opening lead to?"

"The forward hold, lad, and that is now half full of sand and water."

"Never mind, I'm going to get the planks up if I can."

With his head still aching Dick set to work and old Jerry helped him. It was no easy matter to shift the heavy planking, but after a while they got one plank up and then used this as a pry to bring up the second.

A dark hole was revealed, covered at the bottom with water. Then Dick took the lantern and let himself down cautiously.

"The water is only about a foot deep," he announced. "I'm going to make a search around with the lantern."

"Hold on, I'll go with ye," cried old Jerry, and came down with a splash.

With great caution they moved around the hold, wading through sand and water, and climbing over boxes, barrels, and crates.

"What a mixture of cargo," said Dick. "And what a pity so much of it is going to ruin," and he pointed to some valuable mining machinery which was rusting in the salt water.

Fortunately old Jerry had been in the hold before the *Golden Wave* was wrecked, so he knew something of the surroundings. He led the way to some boxes directly beneath the forward hatch.

"I don't reckon the hatch is fastened down," he said. "An' if it aint we may be able to shove it up by standing one box on top of another."

This was tried, and after much difficulty the hatch was thrown to one side, and they crawled to the deck of the schooner.

"I'm glad I am out of that!" ejaculated Dick. "But how it's raining! Let us go to the cabin for shelter."

Once in the cabin they proceeded to make themselves as comfortable as the state of affairs permitted.

"With no boat it is going to be no easy matter getting back to the house," said Dick. He was much worried concerning the girls.

"We'll have to stay here until the storm is over," said old Jerry.

But Dick demurred and at last it was decided to try getting to the house by journeying from one island to the next.

This was a dangerous proceeding, as we already know. They had to build themselves a small raft and carry this from one crossing to the next.

By the time the last crossing was made the storm was clearing and the day was drawing to a close.

"We had best not show ourselves until we are sure how the land lays," said Dick, as they came up the beach.

Captain Jerry thought this good advice and they proceeded with caution until they came in sight of the house. Then Dick set up a shout.

"Tom, Sam, and Captain Blossom are back! Hurrah!"

"They look as if they were having a row with Baxter and the mate," came from old Jerry.

A row certainly was in progress, and as they came closer they heard Tom talking.

"Yes, Lesher, I want to know all about this quarrel with my brother Dick. I am sure he was not in the wrong."

"See here, I know my own business," the mate growled. "You shut up and leave me alone."

"We won't leave you alone," came from Sam. "We want to know the truth."

"Yes, tell us the truth, Lesher," said Captain Blossom sternly.

"All against me, aint you?"

"We want the truth," answered Tom.

"Well, if you must have it, all right. He got cheeky and hit me on the head with an oar. Then I hit back and knocked him down. Then he got mad and so did Jerry Tolman, and both refused to come back in the boat with Baxter and me."

"I'll wager you started to boss things," said Sam. "Dick doesn't raise a row without just cause."

"Good for Sam," murmured Dick.

"Your brother was entirely to blame," grunted the mate. He was still far from sober.

"Jack Lesher, you tell what is not so," said Dick loudly, and joined the group, followed by old Jerry.

Had a bombshell exploded, Lesher and Baxter would not have been more astonished. Then stared at the newcomers as if they were ghosts.

"How—er—how did you get here?" stammered Baxter, while the mate continued to stare, in open-mouthed astonishment.

"That is our affair," responded Dick. He strode up to Lesher. "You miserable villain. How dare you say that I was to blame when you attacked me without warning? Take that for what you did."

And hauling off, Dick hit the mate a fair and square blow in the nose which sent Lesher flat on his back.

CHAPTER XXV.

TRYING TO COME TO TERMS

As the mate went down the girls gave a scream, and even Tom and Sam looked at Dick in wonder. Never had any of them seen the eldest Rover so aroused.

"My lad, that was a hard blow," observed Captain Blossom, as Jack Lesher lay where he had fallen.

"Not half as hard as the blow he struck me," answered Dick.

"Not hard as hard as thet chap hit me," put in old Jerry, and turning quickly he flew at Dan Baxter and bore him to the ground.

"Hi! hi! let up!" roared the bully. "Let up! Take him off!"

"I'll let up, when I'm done," panted old Jerry, and he gave him a thump in the cheek, another in the eye, and a third on the chin. "Now, then, Dan Baxter, see how you like that!" And then the old sailor arose once more.

"I'll—I'll—" began Baxter, in a terrible rage. "I'll—"

"Shut up, Baxter, until we hear what they have to say," put in Tom. "If you are not quiet, I'll give you a thumping on general principles."

"No more fighting," commanded Captain Blossom. "Dick Rover, tell us what happened on the wreck."

Dick told his story, and then all listened to what old Jerry had to say. In the meantime Jack Lesher arose unsteadily to his feet.

"Where is that boy?" he roared. "I'll fix him." And then he made a movement as if to draw his pistol, but discovered that the weapon had been taken from him.

"Who took my pistol?" he demanded.

"Be quiet, everybody," said Captain Blossom. "Lesher, there will be no shootng here, unless I have to make an example of somebody. You had no business to attack Dick Rover on the wreck, nor attack Jerry Tolman, either. It was a mean thing to do. If we are to remain on these islands together, we ought to keep friendly."

"I know my business," growled the mate.

"And I know mine, Lesher. Please remember that I am captain."

"And I am first mate."

"Your being first mate doesn't count with us," came from Tom.

"Not for a minute," added Dick. "If I had my own way, I'd pitch you out of this camp in double-quick order."

"And Dan Baxter with him," put in Sam.

"Why cannot both of them go and live with the other sailors who were saved?" asked Dora. "They could have their share of what is on the wreck."

"I see you don't care for their company," said Captain Blossom. "Well, I can't say that I blame you, miss. After this they shall keep their distance. They can either live on the wreck or build themselves their own house, and so can the other sailors who were saved."

"You are not my master!" cried Dan Baxter. "On these islands all are equal."

"That may be so, but you have got to let the others alone," answered Dick. "If you don't—"

"What will you do?"

"We'll punish you in a way you least expect."

After this there was a general talk which almost ended in another all-around row. But the Rovers and Captain Blossom were firm, and at last Dan Baxter and Jack Lesher said no more.

"We ought to remain on guard after this," said Dick to Tom, when they and Sam were alone. "I don't want to trust our enemies for a single moment."

And it was agreed that one or another should watch constantly.

The storm cleared away as suddenly as it had come, and the next morning the sun shone as brightly as ever.

When Baxter and Lesher came to breakfast both were sullen. The mate had wanted more liquor, but Captain Blossom had refused to give him more than a single glass.

"You had better return to the others at once," said the captain. "Tell them they can come over here, and then we will make arrangements as to how all hands shall live until some ship comes to take us away."

The Rovers suspected that Dan Baxter wished to remain behind, leaving the mate to go after the others. But Lesher would not go alone, and off they started at noon, each carrying a good supply of food with him, and also a pistol and some ammunition.

"I wish they weren't coming back," murmured Dora.

"I wish the same, Dora," said Dick. "But it can't be helped and we must make the best of it."

There was a general air of relief when the two had departed. Later on each told his or her story once more, and a general conversation ensued regarding the future.

"Lesher is not the man I thought he would, be," said Captain Blossom. "If he insists on getting drunk he will surely cause us a good deal of trouble, and if I try to keep the liquor from him he will get ugly. More

than that, he has several sailors with him who are old friends, and they like their liquor just as much as he does."

It was seen that the flag of distress was down, as already mentioned, and after Baxter and Lesher had departed, Tom and Dick set off to put the flag up once more.

The way was by no means easy, for the storm had washed the dirt and stones in all directions and the path was strewn with broken branches and torn-up bushes. On the way they picked up hard a dozen dead birds and also saw three dead monkeys.

When the spot where the flag had been was reached they found the tree still standing. The halyard of the flag had snapped and the colors lay in a mass of bushes a hundred feet away.

To get to the bushes the boys had to leap over something of a gully. Tom took the leap in safety, but Sam went down out of sight.

"Help! help!" cried the youngest Rover.

Tom looked back, to see Sam's fingers clutching at some brushwood which grew at the edge of the gully. Then the hand disappeared and he heard a crashing far below, for though the gully was not wide, it was very deep.

"Sam! Sam!" he called. "Are you hurt?"

No answer came back, and much alarmed, Tom got on his knees and tried to look into the opening. At first he could see nothing, but when his eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, he made out the form of his brother lying on some broken brushwood which the storm had swept into the opening.

How to get down to Sam was a problem, and Tom was revolving the matter in his mind when Sam let out another cry.

"Are you hurt, Sam?"

"N—not much, but m—my wind was kno—knocked out of me."

"Can you climb up to the top?"

"Hardly, Tom, the sides are very steep, and—yes, there is a regular cave down here," went on Sam.

"A cave?"

"Yes."

"Where does it lead to?"

"I don't know. It's on the south side of the opening."

Tom's curiosity was aroused, and bringing forth the new rope they had brought along for hoisting the flag, he tied one end to a tree and lowered himself to his brother's side. By this time Sam was on his feet and inspecting some scratches his left hand had received.

"Where is the cave, Sam?"

"There," and the youngest Rover pointed it out.

The opening was about two feet above the bottom of the gully. It was perhaps four feet in diameter, but appeared to grow larger within.

"If we had a torch we might investigate a bit," said Tom. "I'd like to know if the cave amounts to anything."

"It might have a pirate's treasure in it, eh?"

"Not likely, Sam. I don't believe it has ever been used. But if it was of good size it might prove handy for us at some time or another."

They looked around, and finding some dry brushwood made two rude torches. With these flaring brightly they entered the opening, the flooring of which was of rock and tolerably smooth.

"We could live in this cave, if it wasn't that the opening to it is in the gully," said Sam as they advanced.

"There may be another opening at the other end," said Tom. "It is certainly quite long."

They had advanced fully a hundred feet, and now found themselves in a chamber forty or fifty feet square. The ceiling was arched and so high that they could not touch it without jumping up.

"This is as good as a house," said Tom. "See how dry the flooring is. That proves that it is waterproof."

From the large chamber there were several passageways, all leading toward the bay.

"Which shall we investigate first?" asked Sam.

"Let us start at the right."

"All right, Tom; the right ought to be right," answered Sam lightly.

On they went once more, the flooring now sloping before them. Here there was considerable moisture, and they had to walk with care for fear of slipping down.

Suddenly a number of bats flew out of a hole nearby, dashing against the torches and against the boys themselves. The rush was so unexpected that each youth dropped his light and put up his hands to protect himself.

"Get out! Let me alone!" spluttered Sam.

"Whoop!" roared Tom. "Confound the bats anyway! Get along and let us alone!"

Lying on the flooring the torches soon went out, and in their efforts to protect themselves from the bats the boys rushed blindly down the passageway. Then of a sudden both slipped on the wet rocks, slid a distance of several yards, and went down and down, landing into a well-like opening with a loud splash!

CHAPTER XXVI

THE CAVE ON THE ISLAND

"Tom!"

"Sam!"

"Are you safe?"

"Yes, but I wasn't looking for such a cold bath as this."

"I guess we must have fallen into a regular well of spring water."

"Never mind what we are in. The question is, how are we to get out?"

"Can you touch the top of the opening?"

"No."

"Neither can I."

Luckily the two boys could touch the bottom of the hole, so they were in no danger of drowning. They were in water up to their waists and calculated they had dropped a distance of two or three yards. All was pitch dark around them and as silent as a tomb, save for some water which trickled close at hand. The bats had departed, leaving them to their fate.

"This is cave-investigating with a vengeance," said Tom, with something like a shiver.

"Never mind, Tom, we won't die of thirst anyway."

"Do you think this is a laughing matter, Sam?"

"No, I don't. I'd give a good deal to be out of this hole and out of the cave also."

"I've got an idea. Let me climb on your shoulders and see if I can reach the top that way."

Sam was willing, and soon Tom was balancing himself as best he could.
He felt around with care, Sam moving from point to point as directed.

"Here is a sharp rock; I think I can pull myself up on that," said Tom. He tried with all of his strength and went up off Sam's shoulders. Then the youngest Rover heard him crawling around the wet flooring carefully.

When Tom felt fairly safe he brought out his waterproof match safe and lit a match. Then one of the torches was picked up and he lit that, but kept it partly sheltered, fearing another attack from the bats.

By the aid of the torch, Sam was able to reach a sharp rock quite low down in the well hole, and when Tom gave him a hand he came up with ease. Both saw that the passage ended at the hole and hurried back to the main chamber of the cave.

"That's the time that right was not right," said Sam, wringing the water from his trousers, while Tom did the same. "Let us try the left after this."

"I trust we don't get left by it," added Sam.

The passageway was small and winding, but fairly level. There were several sharp rocks to pass and then Tom gave a cry.

"I see a light ahead!"

"It must be an opening, Tam."

"Exactly what I think."

Both hurried forward. As they did this, the opening appeared to grow larger and they saw a number of bushes ahead of them. They pushed these aside and saw beyond a clear stretch of the bay and to the northward the house they had built. The opening was twenty or thirty feet above the beach and hidden in the rocks and bushes.

"This is a short cut to the beach from the flagstaff," said Sam. "I wish we had put up the flag. Then we could carry the news of the cave to the others."

"Let us hurry back, Sam. It won't take so very long to put up the flag, with the tree still standing."

When they reached the gully they were careful that no further mishaps should befall them. Having picked up the flag they hoisted it once more, stars down, and then went back through the cave to the beach.

As they had imagined, the others were greatly interested in the news. All left the house and visited the place. The girls did not go any further than the main chamber, but the captain, Dick, and old Jerry made a complete investigation, taking care not to fall into the well-hole or any other unsafe place.

"As the boys say, this cave may come in very handy some time," said Captain Blossom. "In case of a very heavy wind storm it would be a good place for shelter."

"Why couldn't the sailors, Lesher, and Baxter live here?" asked Dick. "We don't want them, and it will save them the trouble of building a house, in case they don't want to live on the wreck."

"No, I advise that we tell them nothing about the cave," said Tom. "If we should have a fight and get the worst of it, we could hide here and they wouldn't be able to find us very readily."

"Do you think it will get as far as that?" asked Dora, and her face showed she was much disturbed.

"I hope not, Dora," said Dick. "But you must remember that we have had some pretty sharp quarrels already."

"I think Tom is right," came from Sam. "We'll not tell the others anything about the cave. If they don't want to live on the wreck, they can build a house or two, just as we did."

On returning to the shore of the bay, Captain Blossom and Tom went on a hunt along the beach and presently discovered the rowboat that had overturned with them during the storm.

The craft was but little damaged and they soon had it mended, and then the captain brought it around to the anchorage in front of the house.

"I wonder when Baxter and Lesher will arrive with the sailors?" said Nellie.

"Not before to-morrow night," answered Tom.

"Then do you know what I would do if I were you?" went on the girl.

"What, Nellie?"

"I'd bring some stores away from the wreck and hide them in the cave. If you did that, it might save us a good deal of trouble. For all we know, that mate might try to take command and refuse to let us get anything more from the ship."

"Do you think he'd do that while Captain Blossom was around?" came from Grace.

"Oh, he might do anything when he is half full of liquor," answered Tom. "I think Nellie is right. I'll talk it over with the others."

Tom lost no time in the matter, and Dick, Sam, and old Jerry agreed that Nellie's idea was very good. Captain Blossom shrugged his shoulders and looked ugly.

"Jack Lesher shall not take the command from me," he said. "If he tries it, he'll find himself in the biggest kind of a row."

"But you must admit that there is grave danger," said Dick.

"Yes, I admit that."

"Then you are willing that we shall hide the stores?"

"If you want to."

"Won't you help us, Captain Blossom? Of course, we recognize the fact that those things belong to you, since you remained on the ship up to the time she struck the island."

This speech pleased the captain, and he said he would help them willingly.

Without delay the two rowboats and the raft were called into commission, and an hour later the men and boys were hard at work transferring goods from the wreck to the beach in front of the cave. Five trips were made back and forth, the boats and the raft bringing over each, time as much as could be conveniently floated.

By the time the last trip was made and the goods piled on the beach and covered with a large tarpaulin, it was dark and all were utterly worn out by their labors. The girls had prepared an extra good supper, and of this they ate heartily and then sat around a little while, when they went to bed.

At the beginning the castaways had kept guard during the night, but of late this had been done away with, everybody being satisfied that no harm could befall them during the darkness.

But as the doorway to the house was an open one it had been considered the duty of one or the other to sleep directly in the opening. This was Dick's night, and the eldest Rover lay there sleeping soundly until about two in the morning.

By this time the moon had disappeared and the stars were partly hidden by some clouds. The night was quiet, save for the hum of insects

in the jungle back of the house and the soft lap-lap of the waves on the beach of the bay.

Suddenly Dick awoke with a start. He sat bolt upright, wondering what had brought him to his senses so quickly. He listened intently, but nothing unusual greeted his ears.

"I must have been dreaming, or something," he thought. "But is queer I should be so wide.. awake."

At first he was on the point of lying down again, but then concluded to get up and get a drink of water.

He arose to his feet and stood in the open doorway, gazing into the darkness. The faint light of a few stars shone in the waters of the bay, and between the waters and himself he presently saw a dark form stealing along, close to the ground.

What could that be? Was it something real or only a shadow? Dick rubbed his eyes and peered out more sharply than ever. It was not a shadow, but a real form, slowly moving around to the rear of the house.

"An animal, or else a man crawling along," said Dick to himself, and reached for his gun, which stood close at hand. Then he made up his mind to investigate, and stepped outside of the doorway for that purpose.

CHAPTER XXVII

A FIGHT WITH A WILD BEAST

As Dick stepped out of the house, gun in hand, the form disappeared behind a small clump of bushes growing not fifty feet away.

"It's gone," he said to himself, but waited patiently, with his gun ready for use.

The clouds were increasing, making it darker than ever. Almost holding his breath, the youth took several steps forward. Then he waited again.

At last the form reappeared, crouched lower than ever, so that it was almost hidden by the rocks and low brushwood leading to the jungle. At first Dick imagined the beast, or whatever it was, was going to retreat to the timber, but soon it appeared to turn back, as if to make another semicircle, this time around to the rear of the house.

It must be admitted that Dick's heart thumped madly in his breast. The gun was raised and he kept his finger on the trigger. But he did not dare to shoot until he was certain of the object of his aim.

"I don't want to kill anybody," he reasoned. And he thought of a story he had once read of a hunter shooting his companion who had got the nightmare and was crawling around in his sleep. For all he knew, it might be Sam or Tom, or one of the others.

But now came a sound which was not to be mistaken. It was a low, savage growl, followed by the rustling of a bushy tail among the brushwood. It was a wild animal, and it was getting ready to make a leap for the boy!

Taking aim as best he could, Dick pulled the trigger. Bang! went the firearm, and a snarl of pain and rage rang out. Then the beast made its leap, striking Dick in the breast and knocking him over.

"Hullo! what's the row?" The cry came from old Jerry, who had been sleeping next to Dick. "Who fired that shot?"

"Help!" answered Dick. "A wild beast has attacked me."

"A wild beast!" came from several throats at once.

"Let me get a shot," came from Tom, as he bounced out of the house, pistol in hand, followed by Sam and Captain Blossom.

By this time Dick had gotten to his knees and was trying to fight off the animal which had fastened its teeth in the youth's trouser leg, for the boys slept with part of their garments on them.

"Shoot him! Hit him over the head with a club!" screamed the eldest Rover. He expected every moment to have the beast fly at his throat, and he knew that that would be his death.

Old Jerry turned back to get a pistol or a club. As he did this Tom rushed past him and up to Dick's side. Taking a hasty aim, Tom discharged the pistol twice.

Another growl rang out and the beast dropped back, shot through the foreshoulder and the neck. Then Tom let drive once more and the beast fell forward, shot through the left front leg.

"Good for you, Tom!" cried Dick, as he arose.

"What is it?" came from Captain Blossom, as he appeared with a shotgun. A shot from this finished the beast and it rolled over and over in its death agonies, and Sam finished it with a blow on the head with a big club.

By this time the girls were crowding outside, having clothed themselves with whatever was handiest. Torches were lit, and a ship's lantern, and all went to examine the creature.

"It looks like a tiger," declared Tom. "Only it is not quite so large."

"I should say it was a California puma," came from old Jerry. "He's a bad one, too."

"I think they call them jaguars out here," said Dick. "They all belong to the same family, you know. Some old American hunters would call it a painter."

"Never mind what it is," said Dora, with a shudder. "I am thankful that it is dead."

"You can be thankful that it didn't chew Dick up," added Tom. "He was in a tight corner, I can tell you that."

"I didn't want to shoot until I was certain of what I was shooting at," answered Dick. "Then, just as I fired, the beast leaped for me. If I hadn't wounded it, it would have had me by the throat sure. But my shot kind of made it fall back, and it caught me by the trouser leg."

"Are you sure you are not hurt, lad?" asked the captain.

"Not hurt in the least," answered Dick, and all were thankful that this was so.

The animal was dragged close to the cabin. It measured about five feet in length, regardless of the tail, and was of a dull yellowish color. Its teeth were long and sharp, and its face had a fierce, blood-thirsty look about it that made all the girls shiver.

"I must confess that I am surprised to find such a beast on these islands," said Captain Blossom. "Usually they are to be found only on the mainland or on large islands."

"What I am wondering is, are there any more around?" came from Sam.

"If there are, we'll have to be careful how we move around," put in old Jerry. "I don't want any of 'em to leap out at me from behind a rock."

"We'll have to be on the watch," said Tom. "I'm sure I don't want to furnish any tropical tiger cat with a square meal."

"Oh, Tom, how awful to even mention it!" cried Nellie.

"I think I know a way to keep 'em away from the house at night," said old Jerry.

"How?" questioned several.

"Keep a camp-fire burning close to the door. All wild animals hate a fire."

"Jerry is right," said Captain Blossom. "We'll do it after this."

"What shall we do with the beast?" asked Dick. "I don't think it is good to eat."

"Save the skin," said Dora. "That will surely make an elegant rug."

"Leave the carcass until morning," said Captain Blossom. "We must get some more sleep if we want to go to work to-morrow."

"To-day, you mean," said Tom, looking at his watch. "It is already three o'clock."

A camp-fire was lit and then all but Jerry retired, it being agreed that the old sailor was to turn in once more when the others arose for breakfast. All but Dick slept soundly, but even the eldest Rover was benefited by the additional rest.

The first work in the morning was to skin the wild beast. This was rather a difficult task since no one had had any experience, outside of the Rover boys, on small game. Old Jerry said he would try a steak cut from

the best part of the the animal, but when he did he said it was too tough to eat. Then the carcass was dragged away and flung into a hole between the rocks.

After breakfast, the men and boys began in earnest to place the stores brought to the beach in the cave. It was hard work getting the boxes and barrels up the incline to the mouth of the cave, and the work took until the middle of the afternoon. Once at the entrance, the stores were speedily shifted to the chamber previously mentioned, and covered again with the tarpaulin. With the stores were placed a cask of fresh water, some dry pine torches and a box of matches. Captain Blossom left a gun and some ammunition in the cave, and the Rover boys added two pistols and a couple of swords taken from the ship.

"Now we will re-arrange the entrance to the cave as it was before," said Dick. "Then the sailors will never suspect what we have done."

By sunset the work was over and all hands were back at the house, taking it easy. Supper was ready, but they waited hard an hour, thinking that Baxter, Lesher, and their party would put in an appearance at any moment.

"I reckon they aren't coming just yet," said Captain Blossom, at length. "Let us wait no longer."

"I'm willing," said Tom. The extra work had sharpened his appetite wonderfully.

The evening passed quietly and soon one after another retired. As agreed, the camp-fire was left burning, and each took his turn at remaining on guard.

In the morning it was Dora who made an announcement that startled all of them. The girl had taken Captain Blossom's spyglass and was looking across the bay in the direction of the wreck.

"There are men on board of the *Golden Wave*" she announced. "I can see them quite plainly."

"Men on board of the wreck!" cried Dick. "Are you sure, Dora?"

"Look for yourself, Dick."

The youth did so and saw that Dora was right. Half a dozen figures could be seen walking to and fro.

"Who are they?" asked Tom. "Lesher and his crowd?"

"That I can't make out," answered Dick, and handed over the glass to his brother.

All could see the men on the wreck, but at such a distance it was impossible to make out any faces.

"Maybe they are savages," came from Grace.

"No, they are dressed like white people," said Captain Blossom..

"Perhaps another ship has come in!" ejaculated Tom. "If it has, we are saved!"

"I don't see any other ship," said old Jerry.

"It may be on the other side of yonder island," came from Sam.

"The best thing we can do is to row over and investigate," said Captain Blossom. "If another ship has come in, the captain may claim that wreck and everything on board."

A hasty breakfast was prepared and eaten, and it was agreed that the captain, Dick, and old Jerry should row over to the wreck in the best of the boats. The three were soon on the way, wondering whom they were to meet and what sort of a reception would be tendered to them.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE MATE SHOWS HIS HAND

Captain Blossom had taken the spyglass along, and as they drew closer to the wreck he gazed long and earnestly at the men walking the deck of the *Golden Wave*.

"They are my crew," he announced at last. "And they are in tatters."

"They must have had a hard time of it since you were cast ashore," said Dick.

"Unless I am mistaken, not a one of them is sober," went on the captain. "They are cutting up like a band of wild Indians."

Before long they were within hailing distance of those on the wreck. Then a voice from the rail hailed them.

"Boat ahoy!"

"Ahoy!" answered the captain.

"What do you want?" demanded the sailor on the wreck. He could scarcely talk straight.

"We want to come on board."

"Sorry, cap'n, but I can't let you come aboard," answered the sailor, with something of a hiccough.

"Can't let me come aboard?" repeated the captain. "Why not?"

"Cause it's ag'in orders."

"Whose orders?"

"Captain Lesher's."

"Captain Lesher!" ejaculated Captain Blossom indignantly. "How long has he been a captain?"

"We made him cap'n yesterday."

"That's right," put in another sailor. "We 'lected him unan—nan—nan'mously; yes, sir, unan—nan—nan'mously."

"You are drunk, Bostwick."

"No, sir, aint drunk at all.—Lesher, he's drunk—but he's cap'n all the same."

"That's right," put in a third sailor. "Hurrah for Captain Lesher and the rum he let us have!"

"Got to keep off, I tell you," went on Bostwick. "If you don't, we have—er—we have strict orders to fire on you, yes, sir."

"To fire on us!" cried Dick.—"Do you mean to say you would fire on us?"

"Now, see here, don't you put in your oar," said a fourth sailor. "You don't count with us. It's the cap'n that was we're talkin' to."

"I am captain still," said Captain Blossom firmly. "If you don't want to obey me, you must leave the ship."

"Aint going to leave no ship!" was the cry. "She belongs to us. You keep off!"

"Yes, yes, keep off!" added the others on the deck.

"The ship is mine," said the captain. "If you refuse to let me come on board—"

At that moment two other figures appeared on deck.

"Dan Baxter and Jack Lesher!" murmured Dick.

"Captain Blossom, you had better keep your distance," said Lesher in a voice that showed he was just getting over a spell of drunkenness.

"So you too refuse to let me come on board?"

"I do. The boys have made me their captain, and as such I am bound to look after their interests. I have told them what you proposed to do, and they don't intend to stand it."

"Didn't I tell you we'd get square?" put in Dan Baxter, his evil face glowing with triumph. "We have all that is on board, and we mean to keep everything."

"This is mutiny!" stormed Captain Blossom.

"Call it what you please," answered Lesher recklessly. "I reckon I and the boys know what we are doing!"

"That's right!" cried the half-drunken sailors. "Hurrah for Cap'n Lesher. He's a man after our own hearts!"

"Supposing I demand to be let on board?" went on Captain Blossom.

"Don't ye go, cap'n," whispered old Jerry. "They are in jest a fit mood to kill ye. The rum has put the Old Nick in 'em."

"You can't come on board, and that settles it," roared Jack Lesher, drawing a pistol. "Keep your distance."

"Yes, keep your distance," added Baxter, and also showed a firearm.

"This is a fine way to treat us, after what we did for you," said Dick. "But, wait, Baxter, the end is not yet."

"Bah! I am not afraid," said the bully. "These men are all my friends, and we know exactly what we are doing."

"Do you expect to remain on the wreck?" asked the captain, after a moment of silence.

"That is our business," answered Lesher.

"I think you will find that you are making a great mistake, men, to follow Lesher when you ought to follow me. I have always treated you fairly, and—"

"Hi! none of that!" roared the mate. "We won't listen to it."

"The men shall listen, if they will. I

"Say another word and I'll fire!" cried the mate, and pointed his pistol at Captain Blossom's head.

"Do-do you mean that?" asked the captain, in as steady a voice as he could command.

"Of course he means it," said Dan Baxter. "He isn't a fool. We are all going to stand by him, too," he added.

"That's right," came from part of the crew. Dick noticed that a few of the others looked doubtful.

"I mean it, and I want you to leave right now," stormed Jack Lesher. "I'll give you one minute in which to turn your boat around," and he pulled out his watch.

"Might as well go back," whispered old Jerry. "You can't reason with a lot of half-drunken men."

"Very well, we'll go back," said Captain Blossom loudly. "But, remember, you haven't seen the end of this affair."

"And remember another thing," added Dick, in an equally loud voice: "Don't any of you dare to come anywhere near our house. If you do, you'll be sorry for it."

Then the three turned the boat around and rowed slowly back whence they had come.

"The rascals!" muttered Captain Blossom, when they were out of hearing. "Lesher and Baxter have poisoned the minds of the crew against me, and have bought over the men with liquor."

"It's a mighty good thing ye put them stores in the cave," came from old Jerry. "If ye hadn't we'd be a-wantin' a good many things in a few days."

"That is true," answered Dick. "Dora told me they must have another barrel of flour by day after to-morrow."

"How many at the cave?"

"Two."

"Well, it certainly was a good job done," said the captain. "But it makes me boil to think they want to keep me off my own ship. On the ocean that would be mutiny, and I could hang every mother's son of them from the yardarm for it."

"Lesher must have told 'em some putty strong stories," said old Jerry. "Otherwise the men wouldn't be so dead set ag'in ye, cap'n."

"No doubt he made out the strongest possible case."

"I wonder if they will stick to the wreck all the time," said Dick. "They'll find it mighty hot when the sun shines."

"Oh, they'll most likely take some of the things ashore, and set up a camp nearby, Rover."

"We'll have to watch them closely."

"I agree with you. Now we have two kinds of enemies—beasts and men," and the captain laughed bitterly.

The others were gathered on the shore awaiting their return, and they listened attentively to what was told them.

"Oh, Lesher wanted to be leader, you could see that right off," declared Tom. "And Baxter will do anything to make it disagreeable for us boys," he continued.

"Well, there is one satisfaction," said Nellie. "We haven't Baxter with us."

"If only a ship would stop here and take us away!" sighed Dora. To her it seemed like an age since they had landed on the seven islands.

"After this we must keep a regular guard," announced Dick. "Unless we do that, somebody may play us foul when we least expect it."

Slowly the day wore away. By the aid of the spyglass they could see the sailors still on the deck of the wreck. Nobody appeared to go ashore.

That night it fell to Sam's lot to be on guard from nine to ten o'clock. The camp-fire was left burning brightly, and the youngest Rover sat near it on a log, a gun in his lap.

"No wild beast shall surprise me," he told himself, and kept his eyes on the jungle back of the house.

His time for guard duty had almost come to an end when a noise down on the beach attracted his attention. By the faint light he made out a raft, which had just come in, bearing the figures of two sailors.

"Stop!" he called out. "Do not come closer at your peril!"

"Don't shoot!" called back one of the sailors. "Don't shoot! We mean no harm."

Sam had backed up toward the house, and now he called to those within.
He was soon joined by Captain Blossom, Dick, and several of the others.

"Who is it?" asked the captain, as he came forth, pistol in hand.

"Two of the sailors from the wreck, I think."

"Don't shoot us, captain," called one of the men. "We are unarmed and want to talk with you."

"They are Gibson and Marny," said Captain Blossom. "They were generally pretty good sort of fellows. I reckon we have nothing to fear from them."

"Are you alone?" called out Dick.

"Yes."

"Then come up to the fire. But mind, no treachery."

"We don't wonder at your being on guard," said the sailor named Gibson, a tall, thin Yankee. "The others treated you like so many dogs."

"We have deserted Lesher," put in Marny. "We came over here on the raft to see if you wouldn't take us in."

"Were you alone?" asked Captain Blossom.

"No, we had Hackenhaven with us. But he fell overboard just after we left the wreck, and the sharks caught him," answered Gibson, with a bitter shake of his face.

"What did Lesher say to your leaving?" asked Tom.

"He didn't know it until after we were a hundred yards or more from the wreck. You see, he and the others were drinking in the cabin, so we got away without much trouble," answered Marny. "They might have shot at us, but it was too dark for them. We had a hard pull to get over here, and when poor Hackenhaven was gobbled up both of us felt bad, I can tell you."

It was now seen that both sailors were almost exhausted, and Captain Blossom allowed them to rest, while Dick prepared a pot of coffee. While they were drinking, Gibson told them the particulars of how the mate had made himself leader of the sailors now left on the wreck.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE BURNING OF THE WRECK

"When Lesher and Baxter got back to where they left us they were very bitter against you," began Gibson. "They told us that you had tried to make them work like niggers, fixing up this house. They said that they wanted to come right back and bring us here, but you wouldn't let them go until the house was finished."

"Which is not true, as all of us here know," said Captain Blossom.

"Lesher also said that you were angry at us for leaving the ship before the rest, and that you had said you would have us all tried for mutiny the first chance you got. Baxter said the same, and also told us that you were going to dump all the rum and other liquor into the ocean, so that the mate and none of the others could get a drop of it while they stayed on the islands."

"I didn't say that, but I did say that Lesher Shouldn't have all he wanted," replied the captain.

"This sort of talk made most of the sailors wild," went on Gibson. "Then Lesher made a speech to them, and they voted to stick by him through thick and thin and not let you rule them. He promised them all the liquor they wanted, and told them that if they stuck by him the whole lot could swear in court that they had found the wreck deserted, so that they could get whatever was coming in the way of salvage. Then he handed around some liquor he had brought along, and some pistols, and most of them said they would stick to him, as I said before."

"What about going directly to the wreck?" asked Tom.

"That was Baxter's idea, and it wasn't thought of until we were on our way to this spot. Baxter said that if we captured the ship we would have you at our mercy, for sooner or later your provisions would run out, and you'd be begging for something to eat."

"The scoundrel!" cried Dick. "So he thought to starve us into submission, eh? Well, he shan't do it."

"I said I didn't think it would be fair on the young ladies," continued Gibson. "But he told me he'd take care of the girls after he had brought you to your knees."

"He'll never take care of me!" cried Dora.

"Nor me!" came from Nellie.

"I'd rather die than leave this place in Dan Baxter's company," added Grace.

"Captain, I want you to understand that Gibson and I didn't agree to what they wanted to do," came from Marny. "But we were overruled, and we had to hold our tongues for fear of being knocked down or shot."

"Do you want to join our crowd?" asked Dick bluntly.

"We do, and if you'll take us in we'll promise to stand by you to the end, no matter what comes. We know they've got the best of it—having the ship's stores—but we don't care for that. They are a drunken, good-for-nothing crowd, and we are done with them."

"All right, men, I think we can trust you," said Captain Blossom. "It's a pity that Hackenhaven was lost overboard and eat up by the sharks. We could rather have spared Lesher."

"Or Dan Baxter," observed Tom.

"With three gone they have but eight men left on the wreck," said Sam. "And we now number seven men and three ladies. If we stand our ground, I can't see as we have much to fear from them."

"It will be all right so long as they keep their distance," said Captain Blossom. "But if they come over here in a body when they are half full of drink, there is sure to be a row and probably some shooting. Still, we needn't try to meet trouble halfway."

The sailors gave some more of the details of their doings while in Lesher's company, and then they were provided with additional clothing, and each was given a pistol and some ammunition. Nothing was said to them about the cave or the provisions stored there, Captain Blossom deeming it best to wait and make sure if they were to be thoroughly trusted.

"You see," said he, "they may be straight enough, or they may be spies sent by Lesher to find out just what we propose to do."

"They look honest," said Dick. "I should trust them."

The long pull on the bay had worn the two sailors out, and they were soon sleeping soundly. The girls followed, and then the boys started to turn in.

Sam had just gone to rest, and Tom was following, when Dick, who had stepped out on the beach, uttered a cry.

"What's up?" asked Captain Blossom.

"Look toward the wreck. What does that light mean?"

The captain looked, and then ran for his spy-glass.

"The *Golden Wave* is afire!" he exclaimed. "That light is coming up out of the cabin!"

"The wreck is on fire!" shouted Tom, and this cry brought everybody out once more.

With remarkable rapidity the light grew brighter, until the heavens and the entire bay were lit up by the conflagration. There was a strong wind blowing, which carried the sparks to the jungle back of the ship.

Listening intently, they could occasionally hear the roaring and crackling of the flames.

"The ship is doomed, that is certain," said Sam. "I wonder if all who were on board escaped?"

"The fire has caught in the brushwood on the shore," announced Captain
Blossom, who had continued to use the spyglass.

"Can you see any of the men moving around?" questioned Dora.

"I thought I saw one or two, but I am not certain. Most of the men must have escaped, but if they were drunk, as Gibson says, perhaps some have been caught like rats in a trap."

The flames continued to roar upward, and toward the island back of the ship, for over an hour. During that time they heard two dull explosions, caused by some barrels of chemicals catching fire. The second explosion sent the bits of burning wood and rigging flying in all directions.

"That will leave the mutineers without a home and without stores," said old Jerry. "They're in a poor fix now."

"I'd like to know how the fire started," said the captain. "Can you explain it?" he went on, to Gibson and Marny.

"I've got an idea," said Marny. "Just before we came away old man Shular went down in the hold with a light to look for some certain brand of liquor we were carrying. He was more than half drunk, and he most likely dropped his lantern and set something on fire."

At the end of an hour and a half the flames had died down to the water's edge. A few small bits of wreckage continued to burn, and also a grove of trees and brushwood on the island. But before morning every bit of the fire was out, and only a heavy smoke showed where the *Golden Wave* had once rested.

No one had thought of retiring again, and sunrise found them all worn out, and anxious to know what was going to happen next.

"You can rest assured that some of them will be over here sooner or later," said Dick. "Now they have no place to shelter them, and no provisions, they will want us to help them out."

"What will you do, Dick?" asked Dora.

"That depends on Captain Blossom, Dora. Personally I want nothing to do with any of them."

"But some may be badly burnt, and they may need medicine and bandages," came from Nellie.

"We can send them whatever we can spare," said Tom. "But I object strongly to letting anybody come here."

It was decided to remain on guard during the day, and all were cautioned to keep within call of the house. The bay was scanned for the sight of a rowboat, but none put in an appearance.

"I'll wager that those who did escape are sorry they quarreled with us," said Sam.

"Especially Dan Baxter," answered Grace. "He'll find that living out in the woods isn't so pleasant as it looks."

By nightfall all grew anxious, and sat in front of the house to discuss the situation.

"It can't be possible that all on board were burnt up," said Dick. "That would be horrible."

"Oh, some must have escaped," answered Captain Blossom. "But they may be suffering from burns, or they may have no means of getting here. With the ship burnt up, and all the tools gone, it would be no easy matter to build even the roughest kind of a raft."

"What do you think about some of us rowing over to what is left of the wreck?" asked Sam.

"I was thinking of that. But, if we do that, we had better wait until to-morrow morning. You can't see much in the dark."

"If I thought anybody was dying for the want of aid, I'd go over," said Tom. "We all know what brutes Lesher and Baxter are. They wouldn't hesitate to go off and leave some of the others to die where they had fallen."

"I think Tom is right, and some of us ought to go over," said Dick.

"I'm willing to go," announced old Jerry. "We can move around like cats in the dark, so they won't know we are near until we tell 'em."

"You might take some medicines along, and some bandages," said Nellie.

"Take a bottle of sweet oil and some flour," put in Grace. "They are both good for burns."

The matter was talked over until midnight, and then it was settled that Dick, Tom, and old Jerry should take the largest rowboat and some bandages and medicines and row over to the vicinity of the fire. They were to land on the beach below what was left of the wreck and crawl through the bushes on a tour of discovery. If they found that they were not absolutely needed, they were to return without making their presence known to the mutineers and Dan Baxter.

The two boys and the old sailor were soon on the way. Care had been taken to wrap cloth around the oars where they slipped in the row-locks, so that the boat moved through the water, as noiselessly as a shadow.

Once out in the bay the boys and old Jerry, pulled with a will, and in less than half an hour the beach north of what was left of the wreck was gained. They approached with great caution.

"Do you see or hear anything?" whispered Tom.

"No," answered Dick, and then the rowboat grated on the sand, and all leaped ashore.

With their medicines and bandages in their pockets, and pistols in hand, they commenced to crawl through the bushes. Before long they came to a point from which they could look toward the wreck. All was dark and deserted and the air was filled with the smell of burnt wood and water.

"I don't see anybody, do you?" whispered Dick.

"Nary a soul in sight," answered old Jerry.

With equal care they moved around to the other side of the wreck, over a mass of burnt brushwood.

"Hark!" said Tom.

They listened, and, from a distance, made out a faint groan.

"That is somebody, and in great pain," said Dick. "Come on," and he led the way.

Around a pile of rocks they found a sailor. He was propped up against a tree, and was suffering from some burns on his legs and feet.

"Bostwick!" said old Jerry.

"Oh! oh! Help me!" groaned Bostwick piteously. "Give me a drink of water!"

"Where are the others?" asked Dick.

"Gone! They left me to take care of myself. Oh, the wretches! Please help me; won't you, for the love of Heaven!"

"Yes, we will help you," answered Tom.

"You are certain they have all gone?" went on Dick, as he got out some oil and bandages, while Tom ran for water.

"Yes, yes!"

"Where did they go?"

"They went—oh, my legs and feet! How they smart! They went to the—the—house! Lesher said you must have set the ship on fire, and Baxter said the same. They—oh, what a pain! Please be careful!" Bostwick gulped down the water Tom gave him. "That is good."

"What did they say, Bostwick?" asked Dick, as he continued to work over the hurt man.

"They said they were going to pay you back. They all went armed; that is, all but me and Shular. Shular was burnt up. They said they were going to shoot you down on sight, and then run the house to suit themselves. I said—oh, the pain. I—I—how weak I am!"

And with those words the burnt sailor fell back in a dead faint.

CHAPTER XXX

THE DEFENSE OF THE CAVE—SAVED!

"He has fainted, poor fellow!" said Dick, as he bent over the unconscious form of Bostwick.

"We ought to git back to the house at once!" put in old Jerry. "We must warn the cap'n and the others of what Lesher and his crowd intend to do."

"That is true, but we can't leave this poor chap here. He might die for the want of care," came from Tom.

"We'll take him along," said Dick. "Come, lift him up."

As carefully as they could they lifted the unconscious form up and bore it to where the rowboat was lying. Soon all were on board, and while Tom did his best to revive Bostwick, Dick and old Jerry bent their back to the oars, pulling as they had seldom pulled before.

The beach in front of the house was almost gained when they heard a shot ring out, followed by several others.

"Just as I feared!" groaned Dick. "Lesher and the others have begun the attack!"

"Then we'll have to be careful how we land," said old Jerry. "If we aint, we may run right into 'em!"

There was no moon, but the stars shone brightly, so the beach line was dimly visible in the distance. Standing up in the bow, Tom saw a flash of fire from the jungle below the house, and heard the crack of a firearm. Then he saw some dark forms running along the beach.

"Our party is making for the cave!" he cried. "We had better turn in that direction."

Several other shots followed, but they could not tell if anybody was hit. In the distance several rum-crazed sailors were yelling like so many Indians.

Bostwick came to his senses just as the sand was reached.

"Whe—where am I?" he asked feebly. "Oh, my feet!"

"We have brought you with us, Bostwick," answered Dick. "Keep still, and we will do what we can for you."

As soon as possible they took the hurt man up, and all started for the entrance to the cave.

"Who goes there?" cried a voice out of the darkness.

"Is that you, Sam?" called back Dick.

"Dick! I am glad you are back. They attacked the house, and we are going to the cave to—"

"Yes, we know all about it, Sam. We have brought one of the sailors along. He is badly, burnt. Are the girls safe?"

"I guess so. We told them to go ahead," answered Sam.

Carrying Bostwick between them, Dick and old Jerry soon reached the cave, where they found the three girls standing in a group, each full of dread over what was occurring. Hardly had they gotten inside when Captain Blossom came up on a run, accompanied by Gibson and Marny.

"Back, are you?" he said. "I am glad to see it. But it may put you in a tight hole. Hullo, so you've got Bostwick with you, eh? Everybody get into the cave, just as quick as you can."

Once inside of the cave Captain Blossom commanded everybody to he silent. The hurt sailor was carried to the inner chamber, where a

lantern was lit, for it would be impossible to see this light from outside. Then the girls set to work to make Bostwick comfortable.

"Has anybody been shot?" asked Tom.

"I got a bullet scratch on the arm," answered the captain. "And Marny got a few buck-shot in his shoulder. But neither of the hurts amount to anything."

"What do you think the mutineers will do next?"

"Ransack the house first," said Sam. "Oh, but they are a bad crowd! They came on like a lot of demons."

"Of course Baxter was with them."

"Yes, but he kept in the background, for fear, I suppose, of being shot."

With caution one after another left the mouth of the cave to look in the direction of the house. No one outside of their own party was visible.

Suddenly a glare lit up the scene, growing brighter each instant.

"By the great boots!" ejaculated Captain Blossom. "They have set the house on fire!"

"That shows how crazy they are," declared Dick. "In their rage they are liable to do anything. Ten to one they get to fighting between themselves before this is over."

The house, being built of semi-green logs, burnt slowly. As it was consumed, they heard some of the sailors singing and yelling, and heard several pistol shots and a scream of pain.

"Some of them are coming now!" announced Sam, half an hour later.

"Everybody get back out of sight," cried Captain Blossom.

There was a wild scramble, and in the rush Tom tripped and fell. His foot struck a stone, which went rolling down to the mutineers' feet.

"Hi! hi! there they are!" came in a rough, thick voice.

"Where?" roared back the voice of Jack Lesher.

"Up there, among the rocks and bushes."

"Let's go after 'em!"

"Shoot 'em down, boys! They deserve it for burning up the ship!"

Up the rocks came the hard-drunken sailors, accompanied by Lesher, and with Dan Baxter in their rear.

"Back! back! All of you, stand back!" cried Captain Blossom. "Come a step nearer at your peril. We are all armed and ready to fire!"

At these words the sailors halted for a moment.

"Say, cap'n, why did you set the ship afire?" asked an unsteady voice.

"We had nothing to do with that," answered Captain Blossom. "We were all over on this island when the blaze started."

"It's a lie!" came in the voice of Lesher.

"Of course it's a lie," added Dan Baxter. "They did their best to burn every one of us up.

"It is the truth," cried Dick. "Now stand back, or we shall fire on you."

"Come on!" yelled Lesher, and fired a pistol at those near the mouth of the cave.

"If ever I get the chance to have you tried, every one of you shall be hung for mutiny and murder!" cried Captain Blossom, and then fired in return.

The bullet hit Dan Baxter in the arm, and he fell back with a shriek of pain.

"I am killed! I am killed!" he moaned, and ran down toward the beach.

Then came a volley from the mutineers, followed by one from those in the cave.

"Oh, what a close 'shave!" muttered Tom. A bullet had grazed his ear, cutting away one of his curly locks.

Lesher was wounded in the shoulder, and in a moment more of the mutineers ran off, feeling that they were at a disadvantage.

"They can see us out in the open, while we can't see them for the rocks and bushes," said one sailor. "Let us wait till morning "; and so it was decided.

Inside of the cave a council of war was held, and it was decided to block up the entrance fronting the bay with large rocks, leaving only two loopholes open, for watching and for possible shooting.

All of the wounded ones were cared for, and then a watch was set. In the meantime Bostwick was put at ease, and he told the particulars of what happened on the burning wreck, and how Lesher and Baxter had urged the mutineers to attack those at the house.

The remainder of the night wore away slowly. Nothing more was seen of the mutineers, who had retired to the jungle, drank more liquor, and gone to sleep, Baxter with them, moaning and groaning over his wound.

"I am going to take a look around," said Tom, early in the morning.

"A look around where?" asked Dick.

"From where we have the signal of distress. I don't believe any of the mutineers are in that vicinity."

"I'll go with you," put in Sam, and so it was decided.

It was an easy matter for the two boys to make their way to the gully entrance, and with great caution they climbed out of the opening and walked to where the flag of distress floated in the breeze. Not a sight of the mutineers or Dan Baxter was to be had in any direction.

"They are either sleeping, or else they are afraid we'll shoot at them if they show themselves," said Tom. And he added: "I am going to climb the tree and take a look around."

"Be careful," cautioned Sam; nevertheless, he went up the tall tree with his brother.

Once in the tree, directly under the flag, they took a careful look around the island and then out to sea.

"My gracious, Sam, look!" screamed Tom suddenly, and pointed out to the ocean.

"A ship! A ship!" ejaculated Sam.

"Yes, and do you see what kind of a ship it is? A warship, and an American warship at that!"

"Hurrah, Tom; we are saved!"

"Yes! yes! They are sailing this way. Our flag of distress has been seen! Hurrah!"

"We must tell the others right away."

Both slid down the tree with all haste. As they reached the bottom a gun boomed out across the waves.

"That is to let us know that our signal has been seen," said Tom. "Won't the others be delighted when they know a ship, an American ship at that, is so close at hand!"

As quickly as they could they reentered the cave and ran to where they had left the others.

The good news spread like lightning.

"A ship! an American warship is coming!" was the cry.

"Oh, how thankful I am," came from Dora.

"What shall we do next?" asked Nellie, with tears of joy streaming down her cheeks.

"We'll go to the shore and meet the small boat that is sent in," answered Captain Blossom.

Without delay he set out, accompanied by Dick and old Jerry, leaving the others to defend the cave during his absence.

It was nearly two hours before he returned.

"The ship is the cruiser *Jefferson*," he said. "She is bound for Honolulu, to await orders. The captain says he will take us on board willingly, and he will do what he can to help us bring those other fellows to justice."

"Hurrah!" cried Tom. "If that is so, then our troubles as castaways are over."

"And we are not sorry," said Grace. "Not a bit sorry."

And all of the others agreed with her.

A few words more and I will bring to a close this story of the Rover boys' adventures on land and sea.

The captain of the warship was true to his word, and before nightfall all who had been in the cave were safe on board of the Jefferson. Those who were wounded or hurt were given the best of medical attention, and everybody was made comfortable.

"What attracted me to the islands was the bright reflection in the sky when the wreck was burnt," said the captain of the cruiser. "I thought perhaps that a volcano had become active. But at daybreak we saw nothing unusual, and were about to turn away when the lookout discovered your flag of distress."

"What will you do about the mutineers and Dan Baxter?" asked Dick.

"We'll bring them to justice, if we can, lad."

When a visit was paid to the burnt house nobody was in sight. But in the woods nearby a wounded sailor was discovered. He was badly hurt, and, though given every care, died two days later while on shipboard.

"You'll have a job finding Lesher, Baxter, and the others," he said, when being attended. "They said they wouldn't give in to anybody, and when they learned the warship was here they rowed away in a boat for one of the other islands, They'll hide away until after you are gone."

"If that's the case, let them stay here," said Captain Blossom. "It will be punishment enough for them to live here without any stores."

"They may find those at the cave," said Tom.

"Even so, those stores won't last forever," said Dick. "Yes, they will be punished enough, for there is no telling when another ship will stop here and take them away."

"More than likely they'll have to remain here a year or two," said Captain Blossom.

Everything of value was taken to the warship, and twenty-four hours later the Jefferson steamed away on her journey to the Hawaiian Islands.

"How glad mother will be to learn that I am safe!" said Dora to Dick.

"It will be good news to all of our folks," answered Dick. "They will welcome us as from the grave."

"I hope we can get a steamer directly from Honolulu to San Francisco," said Tom. "Our little vacation has proved unusually long."

"Do you think that we will ever see Dan Baxter again?" questioned Sam.

"I hardly think so," said Dick. "After what has happened he will not dare to show his face again." But Dan Baxter did show himself, and what he did to harm the Rover boys in the future will be told in another volume of this series, entitled "The Rover Boys in Camp; or The Rivals

of Pine Island," in which we shall meet many of our old friends again. It may be as well to mention here that Baxter and two sailors escaped from the seven islands just one week after our friends left it. The others, including Jack Lesher, lost their lives while in a quarrel over the last bottle of rum which the mate had brought with him from the burning wreck. Their taking off was an awful example of the evils of intemperance.

It was soon seen that Bostwick was not seriously burnt, and before the trip to Honolulu was over he was able to sit up and to walk a little. The wounds of those who had been shot proved slight.

"We are well out of that adventure," said Tom one evening, as the Rover boys and the girls sat on the deck in the starlight. "And I don't know as I want to go through anything like it again."

"All I am thinking of is home, sweet home," said Sam.

"Just what was in my mind," answered Dick. "How father and Uncle Randolph and Aunt Martha will welcome us!"

"Let us sing," put in Dora, and in a moment more all were singing the first verse of "Home, Sweet Home"; and here let us bid them good-by.

THE END

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